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THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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DETAIL OF BENJAMIN WEST'S "THE DEATH OF SOCRATES"

Reduced to about one-fifth of original dimensions

[The full canvas is reproduced herein, page 30]

THE NEW-YORK
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
QUARTERLY

January 1952

VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER ONE

New York: 170 Central Park West

BENJAMIN WEST'S AMERICAN NEO-CLASSICISM

WITH DOCUMENTS ON WEST AND WILLIAM WILLIAMS

by James Thomas Flexner[1]

THE EMPHASIS commonly placed by art historians on lines of direct influence connecting one painter or picture to another has fostered the belief that whenever there is a similarity between the art of early America and of Europe it must be because the Americans have consulted transatlantic models. Although such an explanation is often valid, there is another basis for resemblance which has not been adequately recognized.

It is an accepted phenomenon in the history of invention that the same idea appears spontaneously in many places when the time is ripe. This also happens in the history of art and for identical reasons. A painter does not live only in his work room, nor is his experience limited to the viewing of pictures. A painter

[1] I am grateful to Miss E. Marie Becker, Reference Librarian at The New-York Historical Society, for invaluable assistance in identifying West's early patrons.

walks the world, and as he walks and observes and gossips, he builds unconsciously into his own personality the conceptions that characterize his environment. In other places where a similar environment exists other personalities are similarly shaped. Thus it is not surprising that the same conceptions appear automatically on the canvases of men separated by space but allied in culture.

The only circumstance under which American artists, working on their own, would fail upon occasion to duplicate European conceptions would be if there were no similarity between the cultures of the two continents. That this was never the situation, the most cursory reading of history will reveal. Many cases could be cited of the independent appearance in America of artistic forms that were also appearing in Europe. This article will be devoted to presenting and trying to explain the unusually dramatic example supplied by the recent rediscovery, made by this writer after more than ten years' search, of a major Colonial canvas: Benjamin West's *The Death of Socrates*, painted in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, probably in 1756.[2]

Four years after making this picture West crossed the ocean to become the first important American-born painter to study abroad. It is a strange phenomenon that he was, in a few more years, considered in the capitals of Europe one of the greatest artists living. West achieved this distinction by playing a leading role in the development of a new wave of neo-classical painting which swept the western world and was to become the official art of France under the leadership of Jacques Louis David. The French scholar Pierre Locquin states that West and his English colleagues anticipated the French movement by ten or twelve years. It has always been assumed that West acquired his interest in neo-classicism after he reached Rome in 1760, and came in contact with Johann Joachim Winckelmann whose *History of Ancient Art* became the bible of the new movement when pub-

[2] The picture was located through the kind help of my high-school classmate, Philip Jordan.

lished in 1764.[3] Yet before he saw Italy or heard of Winckelmann West had painted a neo-classical picture in the backwoods metropolis of Lancaster.

A glance at the illustrations of West's *The Death of Socrates* will reveal that the canvas cannot be explained in the ordinary terms of artistic genealogy. Classicism has never been considered a characteristic of early American painting. Although some of the forms in this picture seem typical of the 18th century, others seem more closely allied to the very earliest art of the Renaissance, a type of painting with which West could not have been familiar. Furthermore, the action is imbued with sentiment that presages the Romantic movement. The creation of such a canvas by an eighteen-year-old boy in pre-Revolutionary Pennsylvania can only be explained through a study of the cultural environment in which he worked.

The main source of information concerning West's early years is the first volume of John Galt's *Life and Studies of Benjamin West*, which was written with the assistance of the painter and published in 1816. The Scotch novelist, who was an extreme romantic, and the septugenarian painter, who had come to think of himself as a sort of Protestant saint, attempted to exemplify the theories of Rousseau by demonstrating that West had been an untaught child of nature, who painted spontaneously out of natural genius which society had not spoiled. The picturesque view thus given of his early years has been repeated from book to book until it became an American legend. However, we shall not be able to account for *The Death of Socrates* unless we dig deeper. In this labor, Galt's biography will be useful, despite its bias. Since the author and his subject collaborated to play down sophisticated influences, we may be relatively sure that when such influences are admitted, they actually existed.

There is another contemporary account of West's childhood.

[3] Jean Locquin, "Le Retour à l'Antique dans l'École Français avant David," in *La Renaissance de l'Art Français et des Industries de Luxe*, V (1922), 473–481. Jean Locquin, *Peinture d'Histoire en France de 1747 à 1785* (Paris: 1912). James Thomas Flexner, *America's Old Masters* (New York: 1939), 41–50.

In 1805, the artist happened on a manuscript that had been written by his early friend and teacher William Williams, whose dates may be given very roughly as *c.* 1710–*c.* 1790. West was led to reminiscence, and his words were written down by the owner of the manuscript, Thomas Eagles. Years later, when Williams' novel *The Journal of Llewellin Penrose, a Seaman*, was published, Eagles' notes were included in the "advertisement," with a quotation from a letter West wrote about Williams, probably at about the same time.[4] West gave information to Eagles a decade or so before he talked to Galt; he was sixty-seven rather than in his late seventies. Since men's memories become inaccurate as they enter extreme old age, when the two accounts disagree Eagles' is more likely to be correct. For the convenience of scholars, the Eagles account, which is only easily accessible in extracts published by this writer in 1944,[5] is reproduced in full as an appendix to this article; as is another account of the incident published years later in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

West was born October 10, 1738, to a former tinsmith who had emigrated from England and kept a rural hotel in Chester County, some ten miles west of Philadelphia. Galt insists that since West lived in a community of Quakers that disapproved of art, he had never seen a picture when he himself began to draw. This seems improbable. As was pointed out by Charles Henry Hart, Galt was in error when he stated that West's father was a devout Quaker; although the elder West attended Meeting, he did not then belong to the Society of Friends. Furthermore, even Quakers had signs before their shops. Avid for culture, they read not only their unadorned Bibles, but also secular books that were likely to have been illustrated with engravings. We must be careful not to underestimate the sources

[4] [William Williams], *The Journal of Llewellin Penrose, a Seaman* (London and Edinburgh: 1815), 4 vols. A second edition, slightly expurgated for children, was published in one volume, London, 1825.

[5] James Thomas Flexner, "The Amazing William Williams," in *Magazine of Art*, XXXVII (1944), 242–246, 276–278.

of design available to Colonial Americans: fire boards, needlework, iron stove plates, coach panels, etc., etc. West's early drawings of birds and flowers which Galt mentions may well have been inspired by the folk designs of the German settlers who stayed at the Wests' hotel on the way to the interior. In his talks to Galt, West stated that he had received his first colors from a band of Indians. Although it is an historical fact that Indians lived on the riverbanks near his home, the story fits so snugly into the Noble Savage legend that perhaps we should doubt it.[6]

According to Galt, in June 1745, when West was six, he spontaneously drew his little sister as she lay in her cradle. About a year later, "Mr. Pennington, a merchant of Philadelphia," who was related to the Wests, stayed at their inn. A complex of evidence indicates that this was Edward Penington (1726–1790), one of the richest and most cultivated young men in Philadelphia. A member of the American Philosophical Society, he was sent to attend the Provincial Convention of 1774 and sat for many years on the Court of Common Pleas. He built one of the most elegant houses in Philadelphia, and was imprisoned during the Revolution as a Tory.

Interested in West's rendition of birds and flowers, Penington gave the boy oil paints, several prepared canvases, and, so Galt adds, "six engravings by Grevling." Since no artist by this name is known it is generally assumed that the pictures were by Hubert-François Gravelot (1669–1773).[7] This contemporary French illustrator of Racine and Voltaire had spent thirteen years in England. His versatility was so great that it is impossible to imagine what were the subjects of the engravings West now fingered with excitement. They were certainly, however, graceful, elegant, and dignified.

[6] John Galt, *The Life and Studies of Benjamin West* (Philadelphia: 1816), 9–32. Charles Henry Hart, "Benjamin West's Family," in *Penna. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXXII (1908), 1 33. J. Smith Furthey and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1881), 761.

[7] Galt, *West*, 32–33. John W. Jordan, *Colonial Families of Philadelphia* (New York: 1911), 577–579. Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists* (Boston: 1847), 518.

West, so Galt continues, took his treasures up in the attic where he played with them when he should have been in school. Rather than make a slavish copy of a single engraving—the normal course for a beginner—he combined two compositions into one picture. "Sixty-seven years afterwards the writer of these memoirs had the gratification to see this piece in the same room with the sublime painting of '*Christ Rejected*', on which occasion the painter declared to him that there were inventive touches of art in his first and juvenile essay, which, with all his subsequent knowledge and experience, he had not been able to surpass." [8]

According to Galt, Penington soon visited the Wests again, and was so impressed with the boy's painting that he invited him to Philadelphia. In his letter to Eagles, West implied that this trip took place in 1747, when he was eight or nine, a date which fits in well enough with Galt's chronology. The lad, Galt continues, instantly "composed a landscape which comprehended a picturesque view of a river, with vessels on the water and cattle pasturing on the banks." In his invaluable publication concerning the early work of West, William Sawitzky, on the basis of a photograph, accepted a canvas at Colonial Williamsburg as this picture. I do not agree. The Williamsburg landscape has no history before its appearance in the 20th-century art market; it fits Galt's description only in the most loose and general way; it seems to me stylistically different from other, authenticated works. Furthermore, it could not have been West's first Philadelphia picture. As Sawitzky pointed out, it must be dated after the *Landscape with Cow*, the Philadelphia provenance of which I shall demonstrate in a moment.[9]

Galt's account makes it clear that when he was residing in the metropolis with Penington, West was taken up by some of the intellectual leaders of that center of American Colonial culture. He was encouraged by Samuel Shoemaker (1725–1800), a merchant who was to enjoy a brilliant career. A brother-in-law of

[8] Galt, *West*, 33–36.

[9] Williams, *Penrose*, xvi. Galt, *West*, 37–38. William Sawitzky, "The American Work of Benjamin West," in *Penna. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, LXII (1928), 446.

Edward Penington, Shoemaker was, like him, a member of the American Philosophical Society; he was attorney for the Pennsylvania Land Company of London, treasurer of Philadelphia and mayor in 1769 and 1771. During the Revolution he was a Loyalist and fled to London where West befriended him.[10]

Either through an introduction from Shoemaker, as Galt states, or, as Eagles states, through a chance encounter on the street, West met his first professional painter, William Williams. The artist told West that "he imbibed his love for painting when at a grammar school in Bristol," England, by visiting "an elderly artist who painted heads in oil, as well as small landscapes." However, he made his living as a sailor. He was shipwrecked on the Central American coast, and lived for some time with the Indians. Then he found his way to Philadelphia, where he turned his former hobby into a profession by undertaking what he called "painting in general." He was also one of the designers and builders of the first permanent theater in America; he taught drawing and music; he composed verse. Either before or after his return to England—he was there by 1780—Williams wrote the novelized account of his experiences with the Indians which West saw in manuscript and which was published in 1815, after the author's death. Similar in style to Robinson Crusoe, *The Journal of Llewellin Penrose* was a great critical success. Admired by Byron, it may have influenced Poe. Even today, it makes exciting reading. The painter at whose feet West first sat was a brilliant man, probably self-taught yet possessed of wide culture.[11]

The boy became intimate with Williams, but this may have been at a later date. Concerning their early meeting, West told Eagles that Williams' landscapes were "the first, I believe, I had ever seen." Admiring some "cattle-pieces," West inquired "how he could paint them so accurately. He said he would show me the secret, and took a small box, which proved to be a camera; he

[10] Benjamin H. Shoemaker, *Genealogy of the Shoemaker Family* (Philadelphia: 1903), 60–64.

[11] William Sawitzky was the first to identify paintings by Williams. See his "William Williams, First Instructor of Benjamin West," in *The Magazine Antiques*, XXXI (1937), 240–242; and "Further Light on William Williams," in *NYHS Quart. Bull.*, XXV (1941), 101–112. Williams, *Penrose*, ix, xv–xvi. Flexner, *Williams*.

showed me the construction of it. I went home, and was not at rest till I had made one for myself, and my father gave me the glass out of an old pair of spectacles to complete it. My delight was then to go into the farmyards and by means of my camera, draw the cattle, etc."[12]

Galt tells another and quite fabulous story, insisting that West reinvented the camera for himself when, as he lay on a sickbed in a darkened room, he saw happenings outside the house mirrored on the ceiling, and discovered that the visions' cause was a knothole in one of the shutters.[13]

West continued to Eagles that Williams had lent him a manuscript *Lives of the Painters* which the artist had himself written, and which "confirmed my inclination for the art." Galt does not mention this manuscript, but makes West borrow "the works of Fresnoy and Richardson on painting." It is important for our study that Dufresnoy and to a lesser extent Richardson, placed great emphasis on classical culture. From them West imbibed the neo-classical theories that had inspired earlier painters like Poussin.[14]

That the infant prodigy took seriously what he read is revealed by an anecdote he later told not only Galt, but also Thomas Sully between 1809 and 1810. When the boy was riding on the same horse with a schoolmate, the schoolmate announced that he intended to be a tailor. West thereupon leaped to the ground, refusing, in the pride of his new profession, to associate further with the partisan of so lowly a trade. The books had told him that "a painter is a companion for kings and emperors." If the prodigy had ever had toward art the humble approach of an artisan, he had it no longer.[15]

According to Galt, West's adventures and ambitions so excited the envy of his schoolfellows that "all their accustomed

[12] Williams, *Penrose*, ix–xi.

[13] Galt, *West*, 60–65.

[14] Galt, *West*, 40–41. Williams, *Penrose*, xi. Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, *The Art of Painting* (York: 1783). Jonathan Richardson, *Works* (London: 1792).

[15] Galt, *West*, 41–43. William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (New York: 1834), I, 39.

sports were neglected and their play hours devoted to drawing with chalk and oker. The little president [West] was confessedly the most expert among them."[16]

Given two or three poplar boards by a local cabinetmaker, West "drew figures and compositions on them with ink, chalk and charcoal." Galt adds that several of the resulting works were bought for a dollar apiece by "Mr. Wayne, a gentleman of the neighborhood." In 1805, West told a friend, so Dunlap relates, that "General Wayne's father" took a liking to six heads drawn in chalk which were among the infant artist's first works, and gave him six dollars for them; the receipt of "so large a price" impressed the boy with the possibilities of making a living from art. West's patron was Isaac Wayne (1699–1774), one of the principal landowners in the district who, after Braddock's defeat, was chosen captain of a militia company to defend Chester County from the Indians. Wayne had been born in Ireland and had received a conventional British education before coming to America; his great belief in the classics as the basis of all learning is revealed by his somewhat pitiful attempts to force knowledge of the Greeks and Romans on his military-minded son.[17]

Dunlap quotes "Mr. Lewis, the American biographer of West" as saying that the boy made colors by mixing the juice of berries with charcoal and chalk. "When about nine years of age, he drew on a sheet of paper the portraits of a neighboring family" in which the likenesses were immediately recognizable. At about twelve, "he drew a portrait of himself with the hair hanging loosely about his shoulders." Dunlap's diary reveals that he quoted Enoch Lewis (1776-1856), the famous mathematician and Quaker journalist, who did a sketch of West for the *Encyclopedia Americana*, which, however, adds nothing to Galt in its account of the painter's early years.[17a]

[16] Galt, *West*, 43–44.

[17] Galt, *West*, 44. Charles T. Stille, *Major General Anthony Wayne* (Philadelphia: 1893), 5. Ruth Lawrence, editor, *Colonial Families of America*, XX (New York: 1941), 104–105. Dunlap, *Rise*, 38.

[17a] Dunlap, *Rise*, 38. William Dunlap, *Diary*, III (New York: 1930), 685. *Encyclopedia Americana*, XIII (Philadelphia: 1833), 125–128.

Galt's statement that "doctor Jonathan Moris, another neighbor," gave West "a few dollars to buy materials with" is corroborated by two letters, recalling happy old days, written by West from England to Dr. Jonathan Morris (1729–1819). Morris must have been an intellectual man since he was much more interested in a good professional education than most local practitioners of the Colonial period: he had studied with Dr. John Bard in Philadelphia and gone on to New York for further training.[18]

About a year after West's visit to Philadelphia—I am still quoting Galt—he was invited to spend a few weeks at the house of "Mr. Flower, one of the justices of the county of Chester." This was Samuel Flower who was listed as a justice of the peace in 1745, but was much more important as an owner of one of the most prosperous iron furnaces in Pennsylvania. The ore was mined from a rich vein at French Creek, part of which, with the necessary furnaces to make iron and steel, Flower owned in partnership with his father-in-law, William Branson. Flower, who seems to have grown up in England, became connected with West's family when, in 1761, his daughter married Dr. Gerardus Clarkson, a brother of West's brother-in-law, John L. Clarkson.

At the time West visited him, Flower had just imported for the benefit of his own children an English governess who, so Galt continues, read the young painter "the most striking and picturesque passages from translations of the ancient historians and poetry, of which Mr. Flower had a choice and extensive collection." That West thus heard "for the first time of the Greeks and Romans" is contradicted by Galt's own admission that the boy had already read Richardson and Dufresnoy.[19]

[18] Galt, *West*, 45. Robert C. Moon, *The Morris Family of Philadelphia*, II (Philadelphia: 1898), 443–446. *Penna. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XVIII (1894), 219–222. Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1884), 225.

[19] Galt, *West*, 45–47. John Hill Martin, *Chester and Delaware Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: 1877), 463. Frank Willing Leach, *Clarkson Family* (Philadelphia: 1932), not paged. Futhey and Cope, *Chester*, 343–346. *Lanc. County, Penna., Hist. Soc. Papers*, XVIII (1914), 62–63.

Hurrying the boy on from Flower's house to Lancaster and a professional career begun before he was in his teens, Galt ends at this point the account of his hero's childhood. I shall attempt to show that West's Lancaster trip took place almost a decade later, as the visit to Flower may also have done. In the intervening time it is to be assumed that the boy attended the local school, made childish pictures, and did the usual chores about his father's house. To Eagles, West spoke of having visited Philadelphia repeatedly when he was a boy, and of calling often at Williams' studio. Thus we gather that he did not lose contact with the circle of brilliant men who were befriending him in the great city.[20]

Writing before 1830, John F. Watson stated that the youthful West, during a visit to Philadelphia, boarded at a house in Strawberry Alley. On large cedar panels over two mantelpieces, he painted pictures. After he had become famous, West asked Samuel R. Wood, so Wood told Watson, to seek out and preserve these early efforts. However, they remained in place until 1825 when Thomas Rogers, the proprietor of the house, took them out and cleaned them. The paintings were then given to the Pennsylvania Hospital, to hang in the same room with West's celebrated *Christ Healing the Sick*.[21]

The pictures in question, *Storm at Sea* and *Landscape with Cow*, are dated by Sawitzky *c.* 1749–1752 because they seem to be the work of a child.[22] Perhaps *c.* 1748–1749 would be a better guess, since after West's sister married a Philadelphian in March, 1749, the boy stayed, not at boarding houses, but with her. *Storm at Sea* is relatively dull, seemingly a copy of a print, but the landscape's unconventionality reveals it as an original picture. The cow, realistic despite the stylization resulting from simplification of forms, may well have been traced from one of the drawings of the cattle he tells us he made with the *camera obscura;* the big

[20] Williams, *Penrose*, xiv.

[21] John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, I (Philadelphia: 1891), 575.

[22] Sawitzky, *West*, 445–446.

square-rigger probably was copied from a print; but the rest of the background is the result of uninhibited childish imagination. West may have imbibed his interest in medieval castles from Williams, but their architectural forms are most enchantingly his own.

Two existing portraits of children seem from a stylistic point of view to precede West's Lancaster period. "According to family tradition," to use Sawitzky's words, they show Jane and Robert Morris, children of West's neighbors, John and Elizabeth (Taylor) Morris. John Morris, who was recorded as a "weaver," bought land in 1747 at Marple Post Office on the line between Marple and Springfield Townships. Guessing from the pictures the probable age of the painter, Sawitzky dates them *c.* 1749–52; an anonymous writer (probably Christian Brinton) in *Yesterday in Chester County Art* says, without citing evidence, that they were painted in 1753. Any of these dates are possible.[23]

Robert Morris is the more conventional in conception. A small boy stands stiffly before a fluted column and semi-circular stone bench, while an irrelevant red curtain is looped across the top of the canvas. However, the dead rabbit he holds in his hand, which seems to testify to his childish pride as a hunter, adds an informal note.

This informality is carried much further in *Jane Morris*. She stands as rigidly as her brother, but her surroundings have little relation to the restrainedly elegant backgrounds we find in most Colonial portraits. Classical culture is paid lip-service in a column which rises to the left, exhibiting one of the strangest capitals ever seen outside an archeologist's nightmare. For the rest, Jane is standing in a naïvely-envisioned glade with brown tree trunks and bluish-green vegetation. Red tulips add to the general air of gaiety. The loose and episodic composition lacks not only the logical organization, but also the striving for patrician grace, which even inferior American portraitists imbibed from English

[23] Sawitzky, *West*, 446–448. Ashmead, *Delaware*, 581. [Christian Brinton (?)], *Yesterday in Chester County Art* (n.p.: 1936), unpaged.

prints; the typical gestures and the typical accessories of the Lely-Kneller school are lacking. A comparison of *Jane Morris* with Copley's *Mrs. Joseph Mann* of 1753, painted perhaps in the same year and when the two artists were the same age, shows how much less conventional West's work was.

As his entire biography reveals, the Philadelphia prodigy was more self-confident than Copley; he had also been subjected to less conventional influences. William Williams was not only younger than Copley's English-born mentors, Peter Pelham and John Smibert, but he represented more advanced currents in British painting. Williams' earlier canvases have been lost; yet those that survive, which date between 1766 and 1775, have an amazing resemblance to West's childish work. I have already commented on a common interest in medieval architecture. More significant is the fact that Williams broke with the stereotypes of the Lely-Kneller tradition to paint a gay conversation piece showing a family behaving naturally in their garden, or to reveal a couple strolling with a dog through a romantic landscape full of crotchety and imaginative details. The unconventional sources of Williams' inspiration are shown by his exhibiting, as the trade signs of his various studios, the heads, not of Raphael and Van Dyck, but of Hogarth and Rembrandt.[24] Williams was an early Romantic, which may have contributed to his interest in encouraging the natural genius of a small boy.

Galt tells us that during his later trips to Philadelphia West stayed "at the house of Mr. Clarkson, a gentleman who had been educated at Leyden, and was much respected for the intelligence of his conversation and the propriety of his manners." This was John Levenus Clarkson (b. 1725), the son of Matthew and Cornelia De Peyster Clarkson of New York. His uncle, Levenus Clarkson, lived in Holland which may explain the boy's foreign education. After his father died, his mother married the Rev. Gilbert Tennent (1703–1764), who was one of the most famous

[24] Rita Susswein Gottesman, *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726–1776* (New York: 1938), 7. Alfred Cox Prime, *The Arts and Crafts in Philadelphia, Maryland, and South Carolina*, I (n.p.: 1929), 13.

Presbyterian divines in the Colonies, and is said to have ranked with Jonathan Edwards and Whitefield as a leader of the Great Awakening. When Tennent had achieved prominence in New Jersey, a church was organized for him in Philadelphia, and he brought his family to that city in 1743. During March 1749, the stepson of this famous man married West's sister, Rachel; West was soon living in their house.

It casts an interesting light on the young painter's artistic education that John Clarkson's brother Matthew (1733–1800) advertised in the *Pennsylvania Journal* of July 25, 1754: "For ready money or short credit. the four seasons painted on glass and in mezzotinto; the six sciences painted on glass and in ditto; the five senses on glass and in ditto; . . . the jolly sailor, the twelve months, several history pieces, and sundry humorous scenes printed on glass; . . . views about London, ditto in Rome, on the river Tiber, in Florence, in Holland, on Greenland whale fisheries." That Matthew Clarkson became a friend of West's a later correspondence reveals. Clarkson had been carefully educated by his stepfather for a professional career, but preferred business; he seems to have published engravings. He became extremely successful as a merchant, held many political offices, was active in the Revolution, was four times mayor of Philadelphia, and, like most of West's patrons, a member of the American Philosophical Society.

West's connection with the important Clarkson family must have been very valuable. Later the relationship turned sour, which may have been one reason why he did not emphasize it to Galt. His sister's marriage to John L. Clarkson proved unhappy; and a son came to England, so the then-famous painter complained, for the special purpose of plundering him.[25]

The moment has now come for us to accompany West to

[25] Samuel Clarkson, *Memoirs of Matthew Clarkson* (n.p.: 1890), 23–25. *The Clarksons of New York*, I (New York: 1875), 126. *Penna. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.*, XXXII (1908), 3–4, 23, 77. Alfred F. Gegenheimer, *William Smith* (Philadelphia: 1943), 97. Josiah Granville Leach, *History of the Bringhurst Family* (Philadelphia: 1901), 116–119.

Lancaster. Galt tells us that the Mr. Flower at whose house West had studied with an English governess, called the prodigy to the attention of George Ross, with whom, so independent records reveal, Flower had business connections. Ross, Galt continues, invited the youth to Lancaster to paint the members of his family. The young artist's new patron (1730–1779), had received an excellent classical education. Son of a leading Episcopal minister, Ross had been graduated from the University of Edinburgh. Although he served as chaplain to several royal governors of Pennsylvania, he became a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and one of the most distinguished jurists in the new nation.[26]

In Lancaster, West met William Henry (1729–1786). An extremely successful gunsmith, Henry played an important part in developing the most accurate firearm then known, the Kentucky rifle, and become armorer for the Pennsylvania troops attached first to Braddock and then to Forbes. Later, he proved one of the most valuable public leaders in Pennsylvania's Revolutionary effort. An inventor of imagination, he proposed many ingenious devices to the American Philosophical Society, of which he was a leading member.[27]

Galt tells us that, after examining West's likenesses, Henry "observed to him that, if he could paint as well, he would not waste his time on portraits but would devote himself to historical subjects; and he mentioned the death of Socrates as affording one of the best topics for illustrating the moral effect of the art of painting." When West stated that he had never heard of Socrates, "Mr. Henry went to his library" and read West the story from an English translation of Plutarch. (As a matter of fact, the story is not told in Plutarch.)

West, so Galt continues, made a drawing and, on receiving Henry's approval, determined to translate it into paint. "Having hitherto painted only faces and men clothed," he feared that "he

[26] Galt, *West*, 47–48. *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIV (New York: 1935), 177–178. Charles S. Boyer, *Early Forges and Furnaces in New Jersey* (Philadelphia: 1931), 57–58.

[27] Francis Jordan, Jr., *The Life of William Henry* (Lancaster: 1910).

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES
Canvas 34 x 41 inches
By Benjamin West, Lancaster, Pa., probably 1756
Owned by Mrs. Thomas H. A. Stites (Photo by FARL)

should be unable to do justice to the figure of the slave who presented the poison, and which he thought ought to be naked." Henry thereupon called in one of his workmen, "a very handsome young man. . . . The appearance of the young man, whose arms and breast were naked, instantaneously convinced the artist that he had only to look into nature for the models which would impart grace and energy to his delineation of forms."

The *Death of Socrates*, Galt tells us, attracted much attention and enlisted the interest of "Doctor Smith, the provost of the College at Philadelphia" who was in Lancaster advising the inhabitants on the founding of a public grammar school. "After seeing the picture and conversing with the artist, he offered to undertake to make him to a certain degree acquainted with

classical literature; while at the same time he would give him such a sketch of the taste and character of the spirit of antiquity, as would have all the effect of the regular education requisite to a painter. . . . After returning home for a few days, Benjamin went to the capital, and resided at the house of Mr. Clarkson."[28]

In a life of William Henry published during 1910, Francis Jordan, Jr., gives us the story as it had come down in the Henry family. He states: "Colonel Henry invited the boy to his house, assigned a room to his use, and supplied the materials essential to his work. On the walls of this apartment were many little studies that were permitted to remain until the house was demolished. Here West made a number of excellent attempts at portraiture, of which two examples, Colonel Henry and Mrs. Henry, are in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania." West's model for the central group of *The Death of Socrates*, Jordan continues, was a frontispiece from the first volume* of Rollin's *Ancient History* (London: 1738), an engraving that was still in the possession of the Henry family, as was the canvas, which Jordan reproduced in the small and most inadequate cut which

SOURCE OF WEST'S "SOCRATES"

Frontispiece, 2½" x 4½", engraved 1749 for Rollin's *Ancient History*, Vol. IV [An earlier cutting of this engraving in reverse was in William Henry's library, available to West while painting his "Socrates."]

[28] Galt, *West*, 48–52.

* Actually the fourth volume.

has for a generation been our only indication of the appearance of the picture.[29]

Galt gives no date for West's visit to Lancaster, but the sequence of events he describes implies 1748 or 1749. He then gives his hero a period of study in Philadelphia; brings him back to Chester County "when he attained his sixteenth year" (October 1753) so that his choice of profession could be formally determined; and then sends him off for a second stay at Lancaster.[30] Whether West really made two trips is not clear, but it seems certain that the events in which we are interested could not have taken place, as Galt states, during the earlier visit.

Dr. William Smith (1727–1803) did not even reach America until 1751. He was a tutor in New York; visited Philadelphia briefly in 1753 to discuss plans for establishing a new educational institution there, and then returned to England where he remained until May 1754. On August 23, 1754, at a meeting in Philadelphia Smith was appointed secretary of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge Among the (Pennsylvania) Germans, and on the same date a committee was appointed to consider founding a school at Lancaster. On December 28, 1754, a group of Lancasterians petitioned that such a school be actually established, and in 1755 some residents of the city, including George Ross, subscribed a considerable sum of money to help pay "a Latin schoolmaster." This sequence of events lends credence to Galt's story that Smith saw West's painting when he was in Lancaster to help found a school. However, Smith could not have visited the city on such business before his return from England in May 1754, nor is he likely to have done so before the organizational meeting of August 23. Several letters reveal that a trip of inspection he made in September 1756 carried him to Carlisle and thus presumably through Lancaster, but this may not have been his only journey into Western Pennsylvania.[31]

[29] Jordan, *Henry*, 26–30.

[30] Galt, *West*, 45–88.

[31] Gegenheimer, *Smith*, 64–146. Horace Wemyss Smith, *Life and Correspondence of the Rev. William Smith, D.D.*, I (Philadelphia: 1880), 594.

Sawitzky and the distinguished historian of Lancaster, Charles I. Landis, point out that it is extremely improbable that the companion portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Henry were painted before the couple were married. Using as his source an indefinite statement in Jordan, Sawitzky gives the date of the marriage as January 1755. Landis, however, reveals that the Henrys were actually married on March 8, 1756, and that they did not occupy the house in which Jordan said West painted *Socrates* until that year. In his *Henry Genealogy*, William Henry Eldridge also gives the date of William Henry's marriage as 1756.[32]

Probably Galt is right in stating that the death of West's mother later in 1756 brought West's Lancaster trip to an end. Both Hart and Pearson agree, in their articles on the West family, that Mrs. West died in that year, but neither gives a specific date or cites any written record. According to Galt, Mrs. West died practically at the moment the young artist reached his Chester County home. West was detained for "some time" by the funeral and the family distress, "and about the end of August in 1756," so Galt continues, "he took his final departure and went to Philadelphia."[33]

That West began his permanent stay in Philadelphia in 1756 is indicated by an independent source. During 1816, West stated that a miniature of himself had been drawn in that year, when he was eighteen years old. That the miniature was done in Philadelphia is probable because he gave it to a young lady in that city; and because there is a drawing for it in a sketch book that contains drawings similar to portraits certainly created during his Philadelphia years.[34]

The evidence thus indicates that West painted *The Death of Socrates* some time between the Henrys' marriage in March 1756

[32] Charles I. Landis, "Benjamin West and his Visit to Lancaster," in *Lanc. County Hist. Soc. Papers*, XXIX (1925), 57–61. Sawitzky, *West*, 448–449. Jordan, *Henry*, 19. William Henry Eldridge, *Henry Genealogy* (Boston: 1915), 167.

[33] Galt, *West*, 78–79. Hart, *West*, 3. Albert Cook Myers, "Benjamin West's Mother, Sarah Pearson, and her Family," in *Friends' Hist. Assoc. Bull.*, XVIII (1929), 75–76.

[34] Hart, *West*, 5–6. Sawitzky, *West*, 452–453.

and his mother's death which seems to have taken place late in the autumn of that year. The artist was eighteen years old.

The Henry portraits, which were probably painted at the same period, show no stylistic evidence of having been created at a much different time from West's other Lancaster likenesses, including those of Mr. and Mrs. Ross, the commission for which, so Galt tells us, brought West to the city. Since they seem all to have been painted within a year or so of each other, all the Lancaster portraits which Sawitzky discovered may be dated *c.* 1755–1756.

These comprise, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Henry and Mr. and Mrs. Ross, a likeness of Mr. Ross' sister Catherine, and companion portraits of Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Boudé. The Boudés were connections of the artist, since Mrs. Boudé's sister was married to Matthew Clarkson. Dr. Boudé (*c.* 1723/4–1782) had studied medicine in Philadelphia before he practiced in Lancaster where he became "a very prominent man." He was a pillar of the Episcopal Church, and testified to his interest in books by helping to found the Lancaster Library Association in 1759.[35]

The likenesses West painted in Lancaster show a considerable technical advance over the earlier Morris canvases. Forms are more three-dimensional; eyes are no longer holes cut in mask-like faces; compositions are tighter; and affectations of pose, particularly the gesturing of the hands, show a new familiarity with prints after the Lely-Kneller school. West's exhuberant originality has receded into the backgrounds, where it tends to take the form of amazing classical structures. Behind Catherine Ross there is something that looks like a fountain, and also what Sawitzky calls "a sort of stone porch, with an urn on the corner of the roof."[36]

Like West's earlier pictures, these portraits are amalgams of three different manners. A reliance on engravings makes the poses of body and hands increasingly traditional. However, the

[35] Clarkson, *Clarkson*, 17. Leach, *Bringhurst*, 131–132.
[36] Sawitzky, *West*, 448–452.

WILLIAM HENRY (1729–1786)
Canvas 36½ x 30½ inches
By Benjamin West, Lancaster, Pa., probably 1756
Owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

sitters' faces are drawn with an effort at stark realism which, probably because of a technical inability actually to fool the eye, takes the form of emphatic stylization. Into the backgrounds, West draws the past, sometimes medieval but more often classical. This introduction of elements that were unknown in America is done in no scholarly mood: West seems only occasionally to have consulted engravings to see what a castle or a classical fountain looked like. The past was something for his imagination to play on; a delightful vision of a world that, as far as his own experience went, need never have existed outside his own brain.

In *The Death of Socrates*, West moved almost completely into this world of fantasy. The picture is so free and spontaneous that we must conclude that he associated with his imaginary Greeks quite naturally—the way one spends an evening with old friends—and without any of the sense of strangeness that makes a man tighten up lest he misbehave. For this freedom, our researches have supplied the reason. Since he was about nine years old, the boy had been the petted favorite of remarkable people. Penington, Williams, Shoemaker, Ross, Henry, and Matthew Clarkson were major cultural or civic leaders in America's most cultured Colony; they all made enduring marks on history. Wayne, Flower, Dr. Morris, Boudé, and John L. Clarkson seem also to have possessed considerable intellectual sophistication. Galt's picture of an untutored farmboy whistling woodland notes has not stood up under scrutiny. Rarely has a youthful prodigy been encouraged by so many brilliant and well-informed men.

How deeply the culture West's patrons shared was grounded in classicism is revealed by Benjamin Franklin's difficulty in establishing at Philadelphia an "English school" that would teach the knowledges and skills of the modern world rather than of ancient times. He could not get his Academy started in 1751 until he agreed to have a Latin as well as an English school, and under the leadership of West's patron, Dr. Smith, the English school was slighted and allowed to shrink. As we have seen, when the residents of Lancaster, that city on the edge of the wilderness,

subscribed to start an educational institution, they sought "a Latin schoolmaster."

Carl Bridenbaugh points out that it was the lower classes, the artisans and the rising bourgeoisie, who were interested in an education that would include arithmetic for bookkeepers and facts about geography useful to sea captains. The local aristocracy, from which class most of West's patrons came, were more concerned with giving the inhabitants of the New World the old-fashioned gentlemanly education of the Old. That classical times seemed even remoter in Philadelphia than in London only made it seem more urgent to import knowledge of them across the ocean.[37]

There is, however, no reason to believe that West received a thorough classical training. After he became president of the Royal Academy, Englishmen who considered him a great artist recognized his lack of conventional training—"at no time in his life had he any claim to be called an educated man"—and his loving wife told the diarist, Joseph Farington, that he "was so devoted to drawing when a child and youth that every other part of his education was neglected." Galt tells us that when Dr. Smith taught West, he ignored the fundamentals of classical pedagogy to give more emphasis to the spirit of antiquity and to happenings that would make edifying pictures; probably West's other patrons followed the same course. Talking to brilliant men not as a schoolboy but as a painting prodigy needing material for his art, the 18th-century lad was encouraged, like pupils in the most modern of 20th-century schools, to skim the cream of knowledge and not bother with the milk.[38]

West might have imbibed a more inhibited view of antiquity had his patrons not been, as a group, young men. When the lad painted *Socrates*, Isaac Wayne was, it is true, fifty-seven, and William Williams about forty-six. None of the rest of his friends whose birth dates have been determined had entered middle-age:

[37] Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen* (New York: 1942), 40–69.
[38] Galt, *West*, 51. Flexner, *America's Old Masters*, 36.

Boudé was about thirty-two; Shoemaker and John Clarkson, thirty-one; Penington, thirty; Smith, twenty-nine; Henry and Dr. Morris, twenty-seven; Ross, twenty-six, and Matthew Clarkson, twenty-three.

The contrast between *The Death of Socrates* (1756) and *Mars, Venus, and Vulcan* painted by the youthful Copley at about the same time (1754) demonstrates West's startling departure from the conventional view of antiquity. Copley seems to have made a meticulous copy of a print; West used the frontispiece to Rollin's *Ancient History* only as a starting point for personal improvisations. Although taken from the engraving, the architectural background has been enlarged and moved around to fit West's more expansive composition: note how that stone block with a chain attached to it has sailed far off to the other side of the composition; how the round window is in an altogether different place and seen from an altogether different angle. The crouching figure in the foreground of the print is in a similar position in the painting, but his outstretched leg is now on the other side of the composition and attached to a different person. Closest to the original is the figure of Socrates, but even here there are changes, such as in the folds of the falling mantle, and in the arm holding the goblet, which is not so far outstretched.

Galt tells us that West drew his characters from living figures. His statement that West wished the slave bearing the poison to be naked, and depicted the torso from an actual model, is borne out by the fact that in the print the slave is largely covered and in the canvas naked to as far below the waist as modesty permitted. West was already showing the originality that was to make him a pioneer in several European art movements, for it was Copley's reliance on exact imitations of transatlantic sources that was the American norm in figure painting. During 1744, for instance, Robert Feke (active *c.* 1741–*c.* 1750), the successful portraitist whose Long Island origin W. Phoenix Belknap, Jr., has recently proved, exhibited to visitors in his Newport studio "a large table of the Judgement of Hercules copied by him from a frontispiece

MARS, VENUS AND VULCAN
Canvas 30 x 25 inches
By John Singleton Copley, 1754

Photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Present owner unknown)

of the Earl of Shaftesbury"; while in Boston the venerable and famous Smibert impressed connoisseurs by showing them a copy he had made in Europe of Poussin's *Continence of Scipio*.[39]

The torso West depicted from life might almost have been out of a European primitive of the 13th century. Since painting that predated by many years the age of Raphael was neither admired nor collected in the mid-18th century, no motivation existed for carrying such pictures across the Atlantic, and it is highly improbable that West had ever seen one. The naïve and intense boy seems automatically to have drawn the human figure somewhat as it was drawn by the naïve and intense artists of a much earlier time.

This strange resemblance exemplifies an intangible that impedes those who try to define American art in terms of chains of influence. There seems to be a way of seeing and a way of painting that is the dead center to which European and American man returns if not pushed in any direction at all. This style crops up automatically whenever an untutored hand puts brush to canvas, producing if the artist is not very able the quaint results so adored by modern interior decorators, and rising with the genius and sincerity of the artist to a closer and closer parallel with the great primitives of the past. As *The Death of Socrates* shows, West had great natural ability, perhaps more than he ever realized.

The canvas is so in need of cleaning that it is difficult accurately to describe the colors. Socrates seems to be wearing light golden-brown robes; the other figures are clothed in dull browns, roses, greens, blues, and greys. The foreground seems to be in shades of brown and the background in dull grey. The canvas, which measures about 34 x 41 inches, belongs to Mrs. Thomas H. A. Stites, of Boulton, Nazareth, Pennsylvania, a direct descendant of William Henry at whose suggestion it was painted.[40]

In enlarging the composition of the small engraving, West

[39] Alexander Hamilton, *Itinerarium* (St. Louis: 1907), 123–124, 139, 164. Barbara N. Parker, "The Identity of Robert Feke Considered in the Light of W. Phoenix Belknap's Notes," in *Art Bulletin*, XXXIII (1951), 192–194.

[40] Mrs. Thurman Rotan of the Frick Art Reference Library.

destroyed its unity. However, it is a strange fact that he imagined a frieze-like arrangement of his figures that foreshadows, although very crudely, one of the basic conceptions of the more sophisticated neo-classical painting which, after his association with Winckelmann, he helped popularize in Europe. There are even rudimentary beginnings of the groups of figures on the two edges of the foreground which, according to neo-classical conceptions, lead the eye to the central group.

Although the composition can only be described as messy, the individual figures have amazing vitality. They exemplify not the calm rigors of conventional classicism but rather the ardors of the romantic movement, that natural expression of the bourgeois class to which West and his patrons belonged. The woman weeping behind Socrates' head expresses grief in the very shape of her back. Letting himself go completely, without any fear of being comic, vulgar, or unconventional, the boy has given his characters wild facial expressions that are, to this viewer at least, strong and moving. The head leaning in second from the left is a startling imaginative conception, as is another that stares with superhuman horror over the slave's shoulder. Tears stream unashamedly from the eyes of bearded patriarchs, and even the elongated hands, with their white highlights stroked down the fingers, seem instinct with tragic emotion. The painting of the drapery suggests an archaic mode, but it seems also to have grown from West's emotional reaction to his tragic theme. Those deep clumsy shadows, cutting with a staccato rhythm across the bodies of the disciples, emphasize their sorrow. West has attempted emotional counterpoint by contrasting the anguished faces on the left with Socrates' stoic resignation in the center, and the bored indifference of the soldiers on the right. Unable to conceive how any human being could be unmoved, West has given the soldiers the brutish faces of automatons.

The many virtues that shine through the crudity of *The Death of Socrates* make one wonder whether West might not have produced stronger art if, like Copley, he had stayed in America long

AGRIPPINA WITH THE ASHES OF GERMANICUS
Canvas 64½ x 94½ inches
By Benjamin West, London, 1768
Owned by Yale University Art Gallery

enough to permit his naïve, largely self-taught style to mature according to its own nature. However, after a brief period as a successful portrait painter in Philadelphia and New York, West sailed for Italy at the age of twenty-one.

In Rome, he became familiar with Winckelmann and Winckelmann's disciple, Raphael Mengs. Moving on to England, he painted during the 1760's such pictures as *Agrippina with the Ashes of Germanicus*, which won him world-wide renown. A comparison of this once-famous canvas with *The Death of Socrates* reveals vastly superior technical resources, yet much of the old vitality is gone.[42]

West had learned to be on less familiar terms with the ancients. Once he had regarded them as imaginary neighbors,

[42] James Thomas Flexner, "The American School in London," in *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, n.s. VII (1948), 64–67.

DETAIL OF WEST'S "AGRIPPINA WITH THE ASHES OF GERMANICUS"

whose emotions he could fathom by determining how he himself would have felt. Now he saw them as inhabitants of a long-vanished Golden Age, who could be approached only through scholarship. Winckelmann demanded archeological accuracy, and if West did not always achieve this ideal, he was always inhibited by the obligation. Furthermore, he had come to realize that the ancients did not respond to emotion like modern men: they were calmly noble. Agrippina as she carries her husband's ashes, her mourning attendants, and the bereaved crowd in the fore and middle ground express no more than a gentle sadness.

But West had not made himself over into a completely new man. He painted even such complicated canvases as this with an awe-inspiring rapidity; it would not be surprising if sometimes, as he dashed in a background, his will went to sleep and his hand painted automatically. Perhaps some such lapse was responsible for the reappearance, back on a parapet overlooking Agrippina's mournful cortege, of the cast of characters of *The Death of Socrates*. Only a few inches high, figures in heavily shaded drapery with distorted figures and faces, race and scream and throw their arms heavenward in hysterical emotion. The featured players in West's painted drama are as classically restrained as anyone could wish, but there against the hills the supers reveal the ardors and excitements of the Romantic movement. We need not be surprised that eventually West painted such altogether romantic pictures as his highly effective *Madness of Lear*.

"The child," as Wordsworth states, "is father of the man"; the Pennsylvania boy did not travel as far as we have been led to believe in order to become president of the Royal Academy.

Winckelman's classicism could not have come to him as a surprise, since he had practiced it in a crude form in his homeland. Indeed, it is possible that, had he stayed on these shores, West, who was the most original of our Colonial painters, and who manifested in Pennsylvania the ability to impress patrons which gave him unusual opportunities in England, might have developed a native version of the neo-classicism he did so much to foster abroad. Certain it is that his *The Death of Socrates* was a spontaneous growth from the culture of mid-18th-century Pennsylvania.

DOCUMENTS ON BENJAMIN WEST AND WILLIAM WILLIAMS

The "Advertisement" which served as an introduction to the 1815 edition of William Williams' *The Journal of Llewellin Penrose, a Seaman* contains information concerning West's early years and biographical data on its artist-author not to be found in other sources. Its accuracy was, in a sense, vouched for by West himself, to whom the editor, with West's permission, dedicated the work "because," as John Eagles said in the letter of dedication, "your intimate knowledge of the Author [Williams] and the circumstance of his having communicated to you many of the facts recorded in it, seemed to require it of me. . . ." Because of the rarity of the work, this important documentary source has remained inaccessible to historians of American art and is therefore reproduced in facsimile on the following pages from the copy obtained by A. S. W. Rosenbach and acquired, July 13, 1938, by the New York Public Library.

An additional source of information about William Williams is "The Beggar's Legacy," which was published anonymously in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, LXXVII (1855), 251–272; and as the work of John Eagles in his *Essays Contributed to Blackwood's Magazine* (London and Edinburgh: 1857), 457–502. This account by the son of Williams' benefactor, Thomas

ADVERTISEMENT.

Some years since an old man, who had apparently seen better days, applied to my father for charitable relief. His language and address bore a character of interest that must have struck the least minute observer. My father was, however, a man of discrimination, as well as feeling, who seeing how ill the superior cultivation of his mind adapted him for the common receptacle for paupers, (which was his object) supplied his immediate wants; which benevo-

our table with the familiarity of an old friend. In this asylum he died, and left to my father all he was possessed of. And let not the reader smile at his legacy, for it was not to be despised; it consisted of many volumes of books, collections of prints, MSS., in particular the following Narrative. It was not in my father's disposition to make inquiries into the details of private history, especially when it was probable they would excite painful sensations; it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he did not make himself acquainted with circumstances, the knowledge of which would now be so interesting.

It was extraordinary that a man of

lence continuing from time to time, he was so much charmed with his good sense and conversation, that he became much attached to him. He supplied him with the necessaries of life, and after some time, was enabled to place him comfortably in the Merchants' Alms House in this city, endowed for the reception of decayed mariners, where, with some weekly addition to the allowance of the charity, he was placed much above want. Here he enjoyed several years of tranquillity. He was beloved by all our family; and such was the kindness with which my father treated him, that I have often, when a boy, seen the old man sit at

such a turn of mind, and with property of such a description, should have looked for an asylum among paupers. It was fortunate he met with a person so capable of appreciating his merits, and preserving to the world the Narrative bequeathed to him. But the incident which happily led to a more accurate knowledge of him, was as interesting as it was unexpected. As an account of it, I insert a memorandum found among my father's papers, dated 10th July 1805.

"Mr Annesly brought Mr West to my lodgings; he dipped into Penrose's Journal, and read several pages in different parts. I was from home

when he came, but returned time enough to give him an account of the author. He seemed very attentive to my history of Williams, and put several questions to me; he said every answer I gave tended to confirm his opinion. "Sir," said he, "I have looked at several parts of this book, and much that I have seen I know to be true; I knew the man too, and what is more extraordinary, had it not been for him I should never have been a painter. It happened thus. I had a relation at Philadelphia of the name of Pennington, whom I used frequently to visit while there. I saw a person carrying a picture, a landscape, the first I

believe I had ever seen; I was very much struck with it, and desired the person to shew it to me; he did, and asked me if I was fond of painting, and if I was, desired me to come to his house and he would shew me other things. I saw there some cattle pieces, admired them, and inquired how he could paint them so accurately. He said he would show me the secret, and took a small box, which proved to be a camera; he shewed me the construction of it. I went home, and was not at rest till I had made one for myself, and my father gave the glass out of an old pair of spectacles to complete it. My delight was then to go into the farm

yards, and by means of my camera, draw the cattle, &c. I knew that Williams had seen many of the things he describes in the Journal, and he gave me the same account of them. He first lent me the lives of the painters, which confirmed my inclination for the art. On my return from Italy, I sent to my friends in America my picture, as a remembrance of me, I had painted whilst abroad. I received a letter from Williams, for that was his name, with a complimentary copy of verses, in which he was pleased to flatter me very highly; but what is more extraordinary, the lines may be considered as prophetic of my future success in life

which it anticipates. I have his letter and the verses by me now somewhere. I take it he adopted the name of Penrose * from a great shipbuilder of that name, who was a great friend of his. Williams afterwards came to England. I was of some service to him in London, but of a sudden missed him from town; and on inquiring, I believe, of one Smith, an engraver, who knew him well, he told me he was gone to Bristol, as he was very poor, and had almost lost his eye sight, to claim

* Nothing is more common among seafaring men, than the adoption of the names of their particular friends, instead of their own.

some provision to which he was entitled from the parish. I was struck with this coincidence with the history of Williams; it induced me to put further questions concerning him, which confirmed my opinion that it was my old friend's composition that was before me, and what you had shewn me of the lives of the painters, I know to be his hand writing." *

13th, saw Mr West again. He said, "Perhaps I am the only person in existence who could give any account of Williams's life and manners. He first came to Virginia from London, in a ship commanded by Cap-

* The MS. shewn Mr West was copied by my father from the original.

tain Hunter. Between this time and his appearance at Philadelphia, when I first met with him, was an interval of more than twenty years, which time I consider him to have passed in the adventures related in the Journal." I likewise find a letter from Mr West to my father, wherein he makes the following mention of the Author.

"From the year 1747 to 1760, my attention was directed to every point necessary to accomplish me for the profession of painting. This often brought me to the house of Williams, and as he was an excellent actor in taking off character; he often, to amuse me, repeated his adventures

among the Indians, many of which adventures were strictly the same as related in your manuscript of Penrose, as was also his description of the scenery of the coasts, the birds on them, in particular the Flamingo Birds, which he described, when seen at a distance, as appearing like companies of soldiers dressed in red uniforms. He spoke the language of the savages, and appeared to me to have lived among them some years. I often asked him how he came to be with them; he replied, he had gone to sea when young, but was never satisfied with that pursuit; that he had been shipwrecked, and thrown into great difficulties, but Providence

had preserved him through a variety of dangers. He told me he imbibed his love for painting when at a grammar school in Bristol, where his greatest delight was to go and see an elderly artist who painted heads in oil, as well as small landscapes."

I have given this account of the Author, thinking it might be interesting to the public. I avoid being lavish of idle commendations of the work, which will speak for itself.

JOHN EAGLES.

Eagles, was written more than half a century after the events described took place. It can only be regarded as trustworthy when the author relies not on memory but on objects and documents actually before him. Yet I have culled from Eagles' unbelievably long-winded text as it appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* all passages not published in the Penrose book which refer specifically to West or Williams, since they contain hints on which future research might be based. The pertinent excerpts follow:

Towards the end of the last century, a gentleman [*Thomas Eagles, father of the narrator*] was walking homewards, in the city of Bristol, when he was accosted by a beggar [*William Williams*] in the street, in these words:—Sir, I have been looking about for a gentleman to whom I might with confidence address myself and tell my wants. I think I have found him in you." Here, the reader will be at once ready to say—"What an accomplished beggar! this flattery was not learnt in a day."—Reader, if such be your thought, you are mistaken. I verily believe that this was the first day in his life that this poor old man, for old he was, begged, but you shall hear further the nature of his "beggar's petition." . . . If I have given the beggar's words, it is because the whole scene was vividly detailed to me by so truthful an authority [*the narrator's father*]. The beggar paused—I know not the reply. After a while he continued, "I am alone in the world, have lost wife and children, my two sons were killed at Bunker's Hill.[42] I have nothing to live for. I want a place to die in. I ask for a pass to St. Peter's Hospital. I think you can obtain it for me." He did not ask for money, but for a place to die in. Such an address as this was sure to move the person to whom it was made. He replied—that the hospital which the man desired was a wretched place, a receptacle for the lowest paupers. "You seem to have seen better days. You would be miserable there. I should be loth to obtain for you that which you desire. You have certainly seen better days." "I have," replied the beggar, for such I shall continue to call him. "I have been a painter—but am now old, and alone, and only want where to end my life." "I must have a further talk with you. Call at my house at ———. In the meanwhile take wherewith to supply your immediate wants, and don't forget to call up on me." And the time was fixed. The man received with hesitation the gift, and they separated. The beggar called at the appointed time, and often repeated his visits. More and more the gentleman became interested in him—was pleased with his conversation—desired him to wait till he could do something better for him—begged him to accept a weekly sum for his maintenance, until he could be better provided for.

[42] Existing casualty lists, as published in *A Memorial of the American Patriots Who Fell at Bunker Hill* (Boston: 1890) are innocent of the name of Williams, but they are admittedly incomplete.

How long this weekly eleemosynary support continued I am not able to say, whether months, a year, or even years. The result was a comfortable location in the "Merchants' Alms-House," where, with, I have no doubt, some other monthly aids delicately given, the old man enjoyed some years of tranquillity. . . . I will describe his portrait as it is now before me—painted by himself, and very well painted, too, in his Almshouse dress.

THE BEGGAR'S PORTRAIT.

First, as to his dress. On his head is a faded red velvet cap, much like that seen in the portraits of authors in Queen Anne's time; a gown of green cloth, somewhat coarse, hangs in loose folds round his person; round the neck a plain white cravat, tied rather slovenly. As to features, the shape of the face is square, but within that squareness is a rounded fulness; the features might somewhat resemble those of Hogarth, but the eyes are not so large, the nose not quite so curt, the mouth more compressed, and there is more of decision in the length and firmness of the jaw than in Hogarth. The forehead is broad and open, and more prominent than in the satiric painter, the brow less arched, the eyes remarkably keen and observant. In character, excepting in the point of observation, the resemblance to Hogarth is lost, for there is no expression of combativeness. It is mild, inquiring, experienced, and meditative upon experiences. You would pronounce him a naturalist, as I believe he was. This experienced look is very striking—visible in his eyes and mouth; you might apply to him what was said of Ulysses—take the Latin version of Horace:—

"Qui mores hominum multorum vidt et urbes."

Men, their manners, and their cities, he had seen; but what men and manners? There is nothing of the Grecian hero in his countenance. There is the impression of the world he had seen—not in its best phase of manners, but in its coarser nature; and though there is gentleness, kindness, in the aspect, it is without its polish—its varnish. It pictures much that he had felt as well as much that he had seen. It is no ideal, but a commonplace portrait of one whom, at first, most people would call a commonplace man, for it would be difficult to class him of a high grade. But I doubt if it were in a gallery, and seen a second time, if it would not arrest attention, and something singular be seen in it. There is certainly an indication of that wandering disposition I have before spoken of, as of a gentle, scarcely perceptible, unsoundness; but much of this was lost in the look of keen observation which the whole countenance had acquired. I have looked at the portrait so often that I find it one of the most interesting I have ever seen. I see a strangeness written in many lineaments—the exact character of which I cannot describe; and it is the more strange on that account: sensible, shrewd, inquisitive,

patient, unimpassioned—as one cognisant of other men's doings and thoughts—uncommunicative of his own. In age he looks not so old in the picture as I remember him. Do I then remember him? it may be asked. Perfectly—and why not? Often, when a boy, have I seen this beggar at his benefactor-friend's table—at the table of a man of polished manners, a scholar, and of refined taste—where he was ever welcomed, unexceptionable as was his whole demeanour, unembarrassed, entertaining, quiet, modest, not from any imposed restraint, but from the sterling, true, simple manliness of his nature. I have described him as I remember him, and as I see him now in his portrait, painted by his own hand, the size of life.

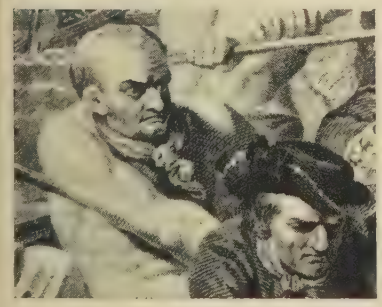
I have mentioned the pleasant, and I may say friendly intercourse between him and his benefactor, (*which* deserves best the name of benefactor may yet be seen). It happened that some weeks passed without his making his appearance as was his wont. This created uneasiness—a confidential servant was sent to the alms-house to inquire the cause of our old guest absenting himself. This servant found him ill in his bed, and in a dying state, and one of those human fiends one sometimes reads of, an unfeeling old nurse-tender, was stealing the sheets from under him. The old man was able to express great satisfaction at the arrival of good Benjamin, such was the servant's—name. He was glad he had come, for he was desirous to make his will. To make his will!—what could such a one have to bequeath? However, he did make his will, in a few words bequeathing to his patron-friend whatever he might die possessed of. That was his deathbed.

Before this event he had one day asked his benefactor if he had ever seen his journal—he would bring it to him. It may have been opened, or not, I cannot say; it may have been considered a mere sailor's journal, and not read. At the old man's death what was the property? I think I have heard not less than a couple of hundred volumes of books. The MS. "Penrose's Journal," a MS. volume of Lives of Painters, collected by the deceased; some volumes of transcribed poetry; portraits of his two wives, and of himself—that which is now before me, and which I have described. Wherein lay the value of such a legacy? It will be presently seen. The affectionate interest in the old man's memory naturally led to a remembrance of his journal—the MS. entitled "Journal of Llewellin Penrose, a Seaman." I have not before advertised the reader that the old man's name was not Penrose, but Williams. I pass on to the narrative. . . . Is it true or a fiction; I can no more tell than any one else who may read it, I can only say, if not true, it is a most ingenious invention, and I should add, that many dates and events spoken of incidentally in the journal have been inquired into and examined and found correct. . . . [*The present writer has also been able to confirm some of the statements in the* Penrose Journal, *although others are obviously fiction.—See the article cited in note 5.*]

His patron, whom I should now rather name the legatee, was so much interested in the narrative of Penrose's Journal, that he copied in his own handwriting the whole of it, and had it well bound with blank leaves for illustration of some of its incidents. His friend Nicholas Pocock, the celebrated marine painter, and subsequently Edward Bird, R.A., made drawings for the book. I was present whenever the latter was at work. The book is now in my sight, with others that belonged to the old man, on my book-shelves. But now, to answer the question as to some further accounts of this old man. As yet no trace of him had been discovered previous to his coming to Bristol. [*Here Eagles tells the story, much as it is told in the Penrose "Advertisement," of West's discovery and identification of the manuscript.*]

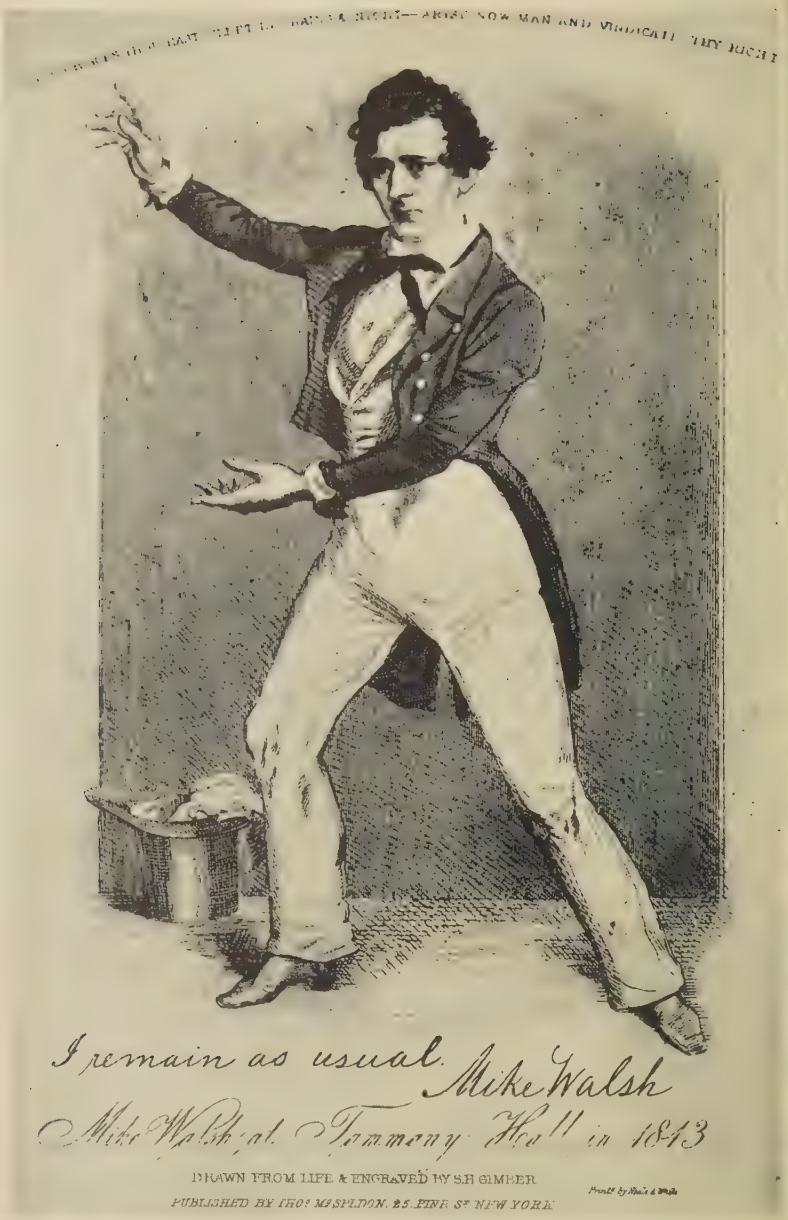
To this account I can add what I heard from Mr. West, that this Williams—so many years having passed since they met in America—surprised him by calling upon him in London. He was then painting the battle of La Hogue, and he made Williams sit for a figure in the boat, and whoever wishes to see his portrait will see it in this print, and I think from the description I have given of him, will not miss finding out the man. Mr. West further said that he used very frequently to come and smoke his pipe while he (Mr. W.) was painting; that he knew him to be collecting prints and heads of painters. That thinking him poor, he had questioned him, but could never prevail with him to own poverty, or to accept money. That he suddenly missed him, and knew not anything of him till he had read the book at the lodgings in London, and had the interview with the transcriber.

But I have said nothing yet of the value of the legacy. I will speak but of one part of it. I sold to Mr. Murray one edition of the "Journal of Penrose, Seaman," for two hundred guineas. It appeared in 1815 in four volumes. Subsequently I received a proposal from Messrs. Hessey and Taylor for another edition. It appeared in one volume, but owing to some circumstances relating to that firm, I received no accounts, and cannot speak of its success. . . .



PORTRAIT OF
WILLIAM WILLIAMS (?)
Detail from Benjamin West's
"Battle at La Hogue"
Engraved by William Wollett, 1781
Courtesy of the Old Print Shop

Of the many figures in the numerous boats, these two in the central foreground—and particularly the old man with naked torso—seem best to fit Eagle's description of the portrait of William Williams.


I remain as usual. Mike Walsh
Mike Walsh at Tammany Hall in 1843
DRAWN FROM LIFE & ENGRAVED BY S.H GIMBER
PUBLISHED BY THOS M'SPEDON. 85 FINE ST NEW YORK

FRONTISPIECE TO: SKETCHES OF THE SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF MICHAEL WALSH (NEW YORK: 1843) [COPY AT NYHS]

THE ONE AND ONLY MIKE WALSH

by Robert Ernst*

NEW YORKERS have forgotten him, yet Michael Walsh was a unique personality in the politics of old New York. In the struggle against monopoly and special privilege during the 1840's and 1850's Mike Walsh—as he always called himself—was a radical Democrat who championed the common man. He flouted the wire-pullers of Tammany Hall by organizing his own rough-and-tumble following, perhaps the first political gang in America. He was sincere, yet he used all the techniques of the accomplished demagogue. As a newspaper editor he was talented and fearless but so reckless that he was sued for libel and twice sent to jail. Born abroad and never naturalized, he served three terms in the State legislature and one in Congress!

There is mystery and obscurity about Walsh's origin. The place and date of his birth vary with almost every account. Walsh's father, it is known, spelled his name Welsh, and the parish records at Youghal, near Cork, Ireland, indicate that young Walsh was born there. One entry reads: "MICK—son of Michael Welsh and Ellen Keeffe, born 4 May 1810. . . ."[1]

When Mike was still a small child he was brought to America by his father, who acquired a mahogany yard and a furniture store in New York City. His wife then emigrated to join the family.[2] Mike's father, an intelligent and industrious man, had peculiar opinions about the proper form of republican government, and he did not become naturalized—a circumstance which later was of serious concern to Mike Walsh, the politician.[3]

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[1] Christopher Sheehan, Parish Priest, Youghal, County Cork, Ireland, to the author, July 2, 1950. Official documents of New York State list Walsh's birthplace as New York City, evidence of a temporarily successful attempt to hide his alien status.

[2] New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859.

[3] J. F. McLaughlin, *Life and Times of John Kelly* (New York: 1885), 145; M. R. Werner, *Tammany Hall* (Garden City, N. Y.: 1928), 44.

Walsh inherited his father's intellectual independence and was fond of books, yet his life was equally moulded by a turbulent boyhood in the streets of the big city. He talked slang "like any tramp who had graduated in the gutter. But, then, Mike's slang was striking and original."[4] This talented boy went for a short time to St. Peter's school in Barclay Street, probably the only formal schooling he ever had. Years later when Walsh was in Congress he recalled these early days with picturesque modesty:

> I never attended school but three quarters, and then I believe I got turned out once or twice. [Laughter.] Yes, sir, I got turned out, for what the schoolmasters in their benighted stupidity termed "bad conduct," but which subsequent events have satisfactorily proven to have been merely a striking and precocious manifestation of genius. [Increased laughter.][5]

A poor boy, Walsh's education was of the "practical" kind. He was ambitious, gregarious, a born leader. To him it was "far better to know the men among whom one lives than to know of men who have been dead three thousand years." If he were deficient in classical lore, he explained, he was "pretty well booked up in the rascality of the age in which we live. . . . I would not barter away all the practical knowledge I have received in lumber and ship-yards for all the Latin that was ever spoken in ancient Rome. I had rather speak sense in one plain and expressive language, than speak nonsense in fifty."[6]

When Mike was sixteen, his father apprenticed him to a lithographer at the corner of Broadway and Fulton Street.[7] Although he learned the trade, he soon grew restless, left his job, and went South. He traveled to New Orleans, paying his way by manual labor in odd jobs and by working on the river boats, and gaining at first hand a realistic knowledge of life among the

[4] Matthew Breen, *Thirty Years of New York Politics* (New York: 1899), 302–303. Walsh is said to have invented many of the slang sayings peculiar to the Empire City in this period.

[5] *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, Part 2, p. 1231 and appendix, p. 1223.

[6] *Ibid.*, 1231.

[7] McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 145.

lowly.[8] "I happen to know something about the people of this land," he later boasted, as a one-time "cabin boy, and deck hand upon the Mississippi, and fireman, working bareheaded and barefooted. I am in the position of a man who never had a dollar from the earnings of any human being but myself."[9]

Walsh returned to New York City in 1839 and became a newspaper reporter. Late in 1842, as Washington correspondent of the New York *Aurora*, he wrote caustic and amusing comments upon the skullduggery of politicians, office-seekers, and contract-grabbers. He advocated a Government Printing Office to eliminate the "princely fortunes which the proprietors of the 'Globe' and the 'Intelligencer' . . . [had] sucked from the public treasury."[10] He was indignant that in the House of Representatives unauthorized persons occupied the seats of congressmen and even participated in the voting.[11]

About Congress itself Walsh had a few illusions. Speeches which were never delivered and debates which never took place were duly reported in the newspapers. The majority of congressmen seemed to Mike as degraded as the party hacks of Albany and New York.[12]

The highlight of Walsh's stay in Washington was his visit with President Tyler. He was invited to dinner at the White House and accorded a warm welcome. Although there is no record of what Tyler thought of his guest, Mike had nothing but praise for the President's honesty and courage, "sound sense, discrimination and patriotism."[13]

The dinner at Tyler's table was not purely social. Only politics

[8] New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859.

[9] *Congressional Globe*, *loc. cit.*, 1230. An apocryphal account, perhaps inspired by the exploits of Davy Crockett, states that Walsh served in a military campaign in Florida and then went to Texas, one of his brothers being slain at the Alamo, another falling in Dade's massacre in Florida, and a third being killed in a duel, a fourth burned to death in the Ben Sherrod, and a sister perishing in the ill-fated Lexington!

[10] Letter to *Aurora*, Dec. 13, 1842, in *Sketches of the Speeches and Writings of Michael Walsh* (New York: 1843), 99.

[11] Letter of December 17, 1842, *ibid.*, 103.

[12] Letter of December 13, 1842, *ibid.*, 99.

[13] Letters of December 6, 9, 12, 1842, *ibid.*, 92–95.

could have drawn together such contrasting personalities as the crude, self-made, outspoken radical Democrat of New York City and the urbane, conservative Virginia states-righter. In the famous "Tippecanoe and Tyler too" campaign of 1840 the Whigs had sought to strengthen their presidential ticket by nominating Tyler (really a Democrat) as William Henry Harrison's running-mate. The Whigs won the election, and "Old Tip" became President, but he died shortly after assuming office. Tyler, now President, refused to accede to the program of Henry Clay and other Whig leaders who had hoped to control Harrison. There is evidence that Tyler thereafter sought to build up a following in New York and that Mike Walsh was the man he turned to. In 1843 it was rumored that Walsh's followers were subsidized by the Collector of the Port of New York. The New York *Evening Post* blamed Walsh and his Custom House boys for disturbances at a political rally, and New York politicians complained to Tyler about hoodlums in the Custom House.[14] Whatever the relationship between the two men, the Tyler movement in the Empire City fizzled out, but Walsh gloried in his self-importance.

Walsh first entered politics probably in the latter 1830's, although he claimed that he had been offered offices even before he had come of age. Like so many aspiring politicians in New York City, he was a volunteer fireman, but it is not known when he joined the Red Rover Engine Company No. 34, which typically spent as much time fighting a rival company as it did fighting fires.[15]

In 1840 Walsh and a number of young friends organized a political club, called the "Spartan Association" (or "Spartan Band"), the prototype of America's political gang. The "Spartans" were Democrats who were ignored by the Tammany leaders and who set out to destroy Tammany control of the New

[14] New York *Evening Post*, September 26, 28, November 8, 10, 12, 1843; New York *Herald*, August 31, 1842, November 9, 1843, July 24, 1844. This evidence is discussed in a recent master's essay on Walsh by Frank C. Rogers, at Columbia University.

[15] Herbert Asbury, *Ye Olde Fire Laddies* (New York: 1930), 171.

York City Democratic organization.[16] Combining politics and sheer rowdiness, they forcibly removed rival politicians from speakers' platforms, tactics which were widely copied.

Perhaps this emphasis upon physical strength gave the Band its name, but if so, Walsh himself was hardly a Spartan. Though he refused to wear an overcoat in winter and slept in the parks—believing that the night air would harden his constitution—he was not a large man and his build did not suggest great physical strength.[17] Besides, he was easy-going. He "did not like hardship or sacrifice at all, and most of his Spartans were just like him. It was the greatest lot of Spartans ever got together. Most of them were Irish Spartans, with French names, and hailing from the East side of the city. Still this highly miscellaneous and erratic Spartan Band was quite a power in local politics for several years, though in influence it never equalled that of its rival, the Empire Club."[18]

Walsh's leadership of his devoted roughneck Spartans was undisputed. At a Tammany meeting in 1842 when he sought a nomination in opposition to the Tammany candidate, Walsh's supporters were in the minority, but upon calls for the "regular nomination," several Spartans descended upon those who had raised the cry and threatened to "break his jaw for him." Opposition to Walsh was silenced, and he was declared the choice of the meeting.[19]

Again, in 1843, the Spartan Band dominated by force a Democratic gathering in City Hall Park. The Tammany leaders thereupon boycotted further proceedings and organized a separate

[16] For the origin of the Spartan Association see *Working Man's Advocate*, November 2, 1844; *Subterranean*, February 28, 1846, September 4, 1847; sketch of Walsh by Helen C. Boatfield in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

[17] McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 149; Werner, *op. cit.*, 44; *McClure's*, May 1895, Vol. IV, 569–580. There is a full-length portrait of Walsh in the *Sketches*, *op. cit.*

[18] Breen, *op. cit.*, 304. The reference to French names is explained by the fact that Walsh gave high-sounding names to his lieutenants, calling them after the French marshals who fought the Napoleonic Wars. McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 147.

[19] New York *Herald*, November 2, 1842. The *Herald*, October 18, 1842, estimated Walsh's followers at four hundred, "many of them wild and foolish" but with "more moral and political integrity than the old rogues" in power.

meeting. Meanwhile the Spartans nominated their own slate, with Walsh heading the ticket as candidate for State senator. Mike then addressed the crowd:[20]

> Fellow Citizens—I came here this day with my friends in accordance with my right as a democratic citizen to express my approval or disapproval of any of the candidates that were to be presented to the people. [Cries of "that's right Mike, go ahead."] I came here to abide by the decision of the majority, and was that not right? [Cries of "Yes, to be sure it was!"] . . . And have we no choice—no rights, or are we to bark like dogs for our masters alone? [Cries of "No, no."] So long as we are prepared to elevate them to high positions and public places, that is all right, but when we take to elevate one of ourselves, that is all wrong in their opinion, and it is this reason which prompts them to strike at me in any and every position that I have recently assumed before the public. They call us the disorganizers and disturbers of the party. I would ask who are the disorganizers here to-day. . . .

Walsh was ambitious for his own future, but he also wished to make democracy work. He could have won office almost at once as a party "regular," but Tammany's price for his advancement was renunciation of his Spartan gang. Walsh refused to sell out. "Give us the tangible proof that they feel for us and our wrongs. . . . Until then the working classes must look to themselves and not to rotten hearted professions of demagogues or political aspirants to elevate them to the position that God himself intended that every man should occupy."[21]

What were the principles of those Spartans who so devotedly followed Walsh's leadership? Insofar as they had any, they favored rotation in office, the abolition of sinecures and exclusive privileges for banks, monopolies, and public contractors, and an end to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. In 1846 after the Spartan Band had lost much of its influence, Mike boasted of its accomplishments:

> We broke up the market, or meat monopoly—we brought the land question, or freedom of the soil, before the people—we destroyed the

[20] New York *Herald*, November 2, 1843.

[21] *Ibid.* Before the Civil War, references to "the working classes" were common, but they rarely had a distinctly proletarian or anti-capitalist connotation. Small, independent producers were members of the "working classes."

infamous pilot monopoly—we prevented honest pedlars from being outlawed by rich store keepers—the Erie Rail Road from monopolizing the emigrant passenger business—the M.P.'s [Metropolitan Policemen] from being appointed for four years. Singly and alone we advocated the Annexation of Texas long and before Tammany Hall or any of its organs dare touch the question. We got the business of weighing and measuring thrown open—and effected a partial alteration in the infamous landlord law. . . .[22]

What marvellous Spartans these were, considering that they held no city offices! Walsh obviously exaggerated the power of his followers, for was he not the acknowledged leader, and did they not reflect his glory as a true democrat?!

In 1843 Walsh and a bosom pal, George Wilkes—later founder of the *Police Gazette*—started a newspaper, the *Subterranean*, devoted to the "subterranean" Democrats whose social, economic, and political aspirations were ignored by the politicians.[23]

The paper was Walsh's personal mouthpiece during most of the four years it was published. Typically modest about his paper, Mike called it "beyond all question, one of the greatest wonders of this or any other age."[24] Its recurring theme was the exploitation of the common people. One day Walsh denounced the cupidity of landlords, another day it was brutal tyranny in the Navy or the robbing of immigrants by boardinghouses and transportation companies. He supported the anti-rent movement in upstate New York and the cause of Thomas Dorr in Rhode Island.[25]

[22] *Subterranean*, February 28, 1846. The M. P.'s were a State-created police force which threatened the autonomy and integrity of the city government and for a short time displaced the local police.

[23] Incomplete files of the *Subterranean* may be consulted at the New York Public Library and The New-York Historical Society. M. R. Werner (*Tammany Hall*, Garden City, N. Y., 1928, pp. 44, 54) calls Wilkes the "most eminent blackmailer of his day" and notes that he was jailed for criminal libel in 1843. Wilkes was greatly interested in the West. His *History of Oregon, Geographical and Political* (1845) was inaccurate, but a portion of it advocating a transcontinental railroad was issued separately and went through several editions. See sketch of Wilkes in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.

[24] *Subterranean*, June 26, 1847. The first number was on July 15, 1843. On January 27, 1847, the paper claimed a circulation of 12,000, a fantastic exaggeration.

[25] For data in this paragraph, see *Subterranean*, September 13, 1845, May 30, July 18, 1846, and *Working Man's Advocate*, October 12, 1844.

One of the panaceas which, during the forties, appealed to the underprivileged element of the population was that land be given free to the poor. If every person had an equal share of the soil, the argument ran, surplus workers would be drawn westward to the great open spaces, and poverty and crime would disappear from the eastern cities. Perhaps the best-known agrarian reformer of the day was George Henry Evans, editor of the *Working Man's Advocate* and guiding spirit of the National Reform Association.

As radical journalists championing democratic reforms, Evans and Walsh attracted each other. Evans, the more profound thinker, tried to win over Walsh, the better leader. The Spartan Association was losing its political influence, and Mike may well have decided to recoup his strength by joining forces with the agrarians, who also made their appeal to the "working man." Although he insisted that the Spartans had endorsed land reform three years earlier, only now did Walsh plunge wholeheartedly into the agrarian movement.[26]

In 1844 Walsh and Evans merged their two newspapers, and the Spartan Band joined with the National Reform Association to send the two men as delegates to a Working Men's Convention at Boston.[27] In a vigorous speech at Faneuil Hall, Walsh advocated that the public lands be given free to actual settlers, urged a shorter working day, and warned against "dishonest demagogues" and "political vultures."[28] He then traveled to Lowell, where, to the consternation of the "respectable" element, he addressed the factory girls. (The man who had invited him to Lowell was fired from his job.) While on this New England junket, the Spartan leader also visited the famous Fourierite community, Brook Farm.

[26] *Working Man's Advocate*, March 30, 1844 (The New York Public Library has the most complete file of this paper); John R. Commons, et al., *History of Labour in the United States*, I, 528.

[27] The merger was suggested by Evans. *Working Man's Advocate*, December 21, 1844; Commons, *op. cit.*, 528, 529; Helene Zahler, *Eastern Workingmen and National Land Policy, 1829–1862* (New York: 1941), 31.

[28] For this and subsequent statements in this paragraph, see *Working Man's Advocate*, October 12, 26, November 2, 9, 1844.

The alliance of Walsh and Evans lasted barely three months. Charging that Evans had suppressed part of one of his editorials, Mike withdrew from the partnership. The real reason for the split was the fact that Walsh's political diatribes took so much space in their paper that Evans hardly had any room for his first love, land reform.[29]

Walsh now revived the *Subterranean* as an independent paper. With unmeasured egotism, he crusaded as champion of the forces of Good against the forces of Evil, attacking persons in high places, now by witty exaggeration, now by coarse invective. He sacrificed advertising for his denunciatory editorials, which were often filled with bitter and even malicious insinuations. Protesting the conditions of local law enforcement, Walsh exclaimed:[30]

> Look at the irreclaimable loafers who fill half the judgeships in our Ward Courts, the half the seats upon the benches of our police offices—look at the beastly bloated booby who had been appointed chief of the pilfering police and then at the conceited lump of stupidity and meanness who now fills the Mayor's chair, and say whether or no New York is not truly blessed through the corrupt political machinery which fills all its offices and defrauds and oppresses its best and brightest men.

Such bare accusations provoked bitter antagonism. Walsh's daily insults in the *Subterranean* led to several libel suits. In 1843 he was fined $25 for calling a man a thief, $100 for libelling Levi D. Slamm, editor of the *Plebeian;* and on another charge he was sentenced to sixty days in the penitentiary.[31] Walsh claimed he was only defending himself from previous attacks upon his character, and he regarded the jail sentence as a subtle means of destroying the *Subterranean.*[32]

While in the Tombs awaiting transfer to the penitentiary, the Spartan leader lived gloriously. He held conferences each day, sharing with his friends cigars, schnapps, crackers and cheese,

[29] Commons, *op. cit.*, 530; Zahler, *op. cit.*, 37.
[30] *Ibid.*, November 29, 1845.
[31] New York *Herald*, November 11, 1843.
[32] *Ibid.* The *Herald* thought that Walsh was victimized by politicians who persuaded Mike to abuse their political enemies. When the sentence was read, Walsh remarked, "So much for being an honest man."

and the prison resounded with wit, fun, and philosophy.[33] The merriment was short-lived. On November 21 the *Herald* reported:

SENTENCE OF MIKE WALSH—ATTEMPT TO SHOOT HIMSELF—ATTEMPT TO DROWN HIMSELF

Mike Walsh . . . was yesterday taken to the penitentiary at Blackwell's Island. . . . [During a parting interview with his wife in the Tombs] he put his hand in one of his pockets, and drew a five barrel pistol, which he presented towards his breast in a position to fire it, when Keeper Fallon . . . grasped his hands, and his wife took the pistol from him. He then passed out without saying a word, and took his seat in the carriage . . . [bound for the ferry at the foot of Sixty-first street]. Mike took his seat in the ferry boat with a dogged silence. The boat was shoved off. . . . The oarsmen had pulled her but a short distance from the wharf when Mike suddenly rose, gave a spring and jumped into the river, evidently with an intention to drown himself. The boat was instantly rowed towards him, and he was rescued . . . then safely landed on Blackwell's Island. . . .

Another version of this escapade is related by Matthew Breen, who knew perfectly well that Walsh had no intention of drowning himself. Far from it. Among those who rallied around Mike after he was sentenced was David C. Broderick, then a rising New York politician and later Senator from California, who felt that his friend had been victimized. He interviewed Walsh privately and urged him to commit suicide and thus show the world that he preferred death to disgrace. The Spartan thought otherwise, but "to please his friend Broderick, he did promise to throw himself into the waters of the East River, on the way over to the penitentiary; and as they parted, Mike Walsh bade Dave Broderick a long and last adieu.

"Hero! patriot! martyr! farewell forever," said Broderick . . . as he wrung Mike's hand fervently. "I will remain behind to see that posterity does you justice."

Mike Walsh, in his heart, resolved to "remain behind" also, in order to assist in doing justice to himself, but held his peace. . . . It is true that Walsh jumped off the ferry-boat which was taking him to the "Island";

[33] *Ibid.*, November 14, 1843.

but he jumped off trying to escape, and was only too glad to be saved from drowning. . . .[34]

Mike served his sentence. A year later he was fined $110 "for whipping a most depraved and infamous vagabond, who gave provocation of such a nature that had I known as much as I do now, I would have cut both his ears off at the time."[35]

Walsh's most famous tilt with the law was in a libel suit brought against him by a furniture dealer named John Horspool. For some reason a bitter feud developed between the two men, and Horspool had Walsh arrested for libel. The provocation was this squib in the *Subterranean* of June 21, 1845:[36]

> FURNISHING OF THE WHITE HOUSE—Several honest, industrious and worthy mechanics belonging to the Democratic party applied for this work. . . . "Who then got it?" Why a miserable, sneaking, mang-dog, English tory named Harspool [*sic*], who since he professed democracy has ever been one of the most ultra hunkers in this City. . . . He was a stockholder to a large amount in the old United States Bank; is notorious for his avidity in seizing every opportunity to oppress and take advantage of his workmen by which means, and letting out furniture to women of pleasure, he has amassed a princely fortune. . . . It is also rumored that he intends refitting some of the second hand furniture which has adorned many a *female boarding house* parlor in his own ward, with the intention of wringing it on the President.

The case was several times argued in the Court of Sessions, and finally on March 3, 1846, Mike was convicted and sentenced to six months in the penitentiary.[37] From the beginning, the suit had strong political implications. Three days after Walsh's conviction, speakers at a mass meeting of several thousand sympathizers in City Hall Park forcefully charged that "political considerations had not been without their effect in determining the guilt and sentence of Mike." A committee was then appointed to ask Governor Silas Wright to pardon Walsh.[38] The situation was

[34] Breen, *op. cit.*, 305–306.

[35] *Working Man's Advocate*, December 14, 1844.

[36] See also the manuscript indictment: *The People* vs. *Michael Walsh*, filed September 18, 1845, in the records of the Court of General Sessions, New York City.

[37] New York *Tribune*, March 4, 1846; *Subterranean*, March 7, 1846.

[38] *Subterranean*, March 7, 1846.

well described by Eugene Casserly, a local Democrat, in a letter to Assemblyman Samuel J. Tilden, who thirty years later was Democratic candidate for President.

> So far as I can learn [*wrote Casserly*] the public opinion is that the punishment was too severe—he having been tried twice before and the jury having failed to agree—and I think would sustain Wright in some leniency—letting him out after a month or six weeks of good behavior on the Island, say, *after* the Spring election. If anything like this should seem good up there at Albany, why cannot you make yourself a little useful in winning over the Governor and at the same time Mike and his friends?[39]

Meanwhile, Walsh was self-righteous and defiant on Blackwell's Island. "It is now past midnight, in a cold, damp cell," he wrote for the *Subterranean* (which he continued to edit by courier), "and I now candidly and solemnly declare in the presence of God, that I regard this as the happiest period of my life."[40] Within a few weeks public sympathy had set political wheels in motion. The entire New York City delegation of State senators and assemblymen, according to the Albany *Microscope*, waited on Governor Wright to obtain a pardon for Walsh.[41] Impressed, the Governor pardoned the prisoner—but not until after the spring elections.

Walsh was released on June 6, after spending three months in confinement. He landed from the ferry amid a tumultuous welcome on the banks of the East River. Hardly out of jail, Walsh penned another malicious article, which led to another indictment for libel:[42]

[39] March 14, 1846. Another local figure, Isaac V. Fowler, wrote to Tilden, March 7, 1846, about a Tammany meeting at which "the Resolution in relation to Mike Walsh must have passed after a large portion of those who went there merely to meet the call of the meeting had left—I am afraid we shall be beaten this Spring." A certain Peter F. Burrough, however, wrote to Tilden, March 11, 1846, in quite another spirit: "I hope that the Vampires of mick walsh will fail in their attempt to get him out of *Prison*, a place that he should live in *all* the days of his miserable life." These three letters are in the *Tilden papers*, New York Public Library.

[40] *Subterranean*, March 14, 1846.

[41] Cited, *ibid.*, March 28, 1846.

[42] Manuscript indictment: *The People* vs. *Michael Walsh*, filed November 20, 1846, in the records of the Court of General Sessions, New York City; *Subterranean*, October 31, 1846. This case was not successfully prosecuted.

Rich.—I have just been informed that a most graceless and unrelieved wretch, named [Hiram P.] Hastings, who came out with a silly and ludicrous card, in a federal paper in this City, has just received the treatment so justly due his manifold crimes and rascalities. It appears that he was lounging and sponging about Tammany Hall bar room, to the great annoyance of every honest man present, and to the great dread of those who had well filled pocket books about them, when he was finally spied by some young men, who were cognizant of his conduct in the affair of the Cloak and boots in the Amity street boarding house. They immediately spotted him to a number of young men, who became highly incensed, to think that a scamp of his depth of depravity should intrude himself into the Society of honest men. A paper of flour was soon procured, with which his person was soon made much whiter than the character of any member of his dishonourable family can be, after which he was tossed some twenty or thirty times to the infinite amusement of those assembled.

The same year—1846—and only five months after his imprisonment, Mike Walsh was nominated at Tammany Hall as a candidate for the State Assembly! After an exciting campaign he was elected. Nobody was more excited than Walsh himself, for on the night of the election he became seriously ill. He claimed to have been poisoned by his political enemies: "The late cowardly and infamous attempt to Murder me," screamed the *Subterranean*.[43] There is, however, no proof of such a dastardly deed.

Assemblyman Walsh, "advocate of no political party—the tool of no corrupt clicque," had been elected against the wishes of stand-pat Democrats who despised his objectionable manners and abusive language. He had no patience with the "miserable mock gravity . . . universally assumed in all legislative bodies by empty headed imbeciles, as a cloak under which to screen their insufferable stupidity."

Walsh flayed the entrenched interests in amusing and sometimes uproarious speeches. As a cogent extemporaneous and anecdotal speaker he had no peer. He was, in fact, a natural comedian, an expert in mimicry and ridicule.

The party regulars and most of the newspapers gave Walsh

[43] *Subterranean*, November 21, 1846. Walsh wrote that this was the fifth such attempt in the last three or four years.

the "silent treatment." The Albany *Argus* was the only local paper to report fully on Walsh's doings, and Mike charged that at least nineteen out of every twenty of his best speeches were systematically suppressed in the published reports of the Assembly debates.[14] He claimed that his presence in the legislature forced the politicians to go underground. "Vile practices . . . [formerly] practiced unblushingly . . . on the very floor of the House, were this winter carefully transacted in oyster rooms with all the secrecy which the matter would admit."[15]

Undoubtedly for its political effect, Walsh dramatically offered his resignation. He claimed that assemblymen changed their votes "like so many spaniel curs, before the Clerk has time to announce the result; and that at the impertinent dictation of a few wire-pulling knaves."[16] Walsh's resignation was not accepted.[17] Mike had made his gesture, however. He asserted that such a demand for his presence had been touched off that he had decided to return to Albany for the next session of the legislature.

Although Walsh left little permanent impress upon Albany, he served three terms as an assemblyman. He was re-elected in 1847 as an independent running against the Tammany candidate, thereby proving his popular strength. In 1851 he was again elected to the legislature, where he served until he ran for Congress the following year.

During his first two terms at Albany, Walsh abstained from many roll calls; his name frequently appeared among the nays whenever there was a small negative vote. He loved to appear as champion of the underdog and probably gloried in his negative votes. Moreover, he loved his liquor—when he posed as a temperance man the Assembly rocked with laughter—and it is likely that when the roll was called Mike was having a good time with the boys in the bar.

Walsh usually was present, as advocate of the underprivileged,

[14] *Ibid.*, May 20, 22, 1847.
[15] *Ibid.*, May 22, 1847.
[16] *Ibid.*, May 20, 1847.
[17] For a technical reason. *Assembly Journal*, May 11, 1947, p. 1323.

to support various humanitarian causes. He spoke against large canal contracts being awarded to a favored few, and he opposed the contract system itself, demanding that the State do a job and pay its workers directly.[48] As a member of the Committee on State Prisons, he protested that these prisons were really supported by free workingmen with whom the prison labor competed, and for contrast he alluded to the profits pocketed by contractors for convict labor. He sought to regulate working conditions of apprentices and minors in industry and to limit the adult working day, and he was made chairman of the committee to take testimony.[49] He introduced and fought for a bill to abolish imprisonment for debt and limit imprisonment for non-payment of fines and presented a petition for the abolition of whipping as a punishment in public institutions.[50] Although a political enemy of Martin Van Buren, who was soon to run for the Presidency on a free-soil ticket, Walsh spoke in favor of resolutions opposing the extension of slavery.[51]

Walsh loved his role as champion of the poor and oppressed, whether in the city or on the land. To a motion granting $500 to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, he proposed an amendment giving the money to a "soup house and lodging place" for the unemployed in New York City.[52] He sympathized, too, with the anti-rent movement of upstate farmers. In a message to the legislature, Governor Wright had touched on a number of topics except the anti-rent question. Walsh took advantage of the Governor's silence by moving to refer that part of the message relat-

[48] *Subterranean*, March 6, 1847.

[49] *Ibid.*, May 1, August 14, 16, 1847; Zahler, *op. cit.*, 86. Mike served on several other committees. In 1847 he had called for an explanation of the high cost of printing State documents, and this may have influenced his appointment to the Committee on Public Printing in 1852. He was on the Committee on the Manufacture of Salt in 1848 and during the Mexican War, on a select committee on clothing allowances of New York State volunteers. The latter recommended an appropriation to supplement the inadequate United States allowance for clothing; Walsh refused to support the pertinent appropriation bill, however, because its preamble censured President Polk. *Assembly Journal*, 1847, pp. 43-44, 589; *Assembly Documents*, 1847, No. 13; 1848, No. 9; 1852, No. 2.

[50] *Subterranean*, January 30, October 23, 30, 1847.

[51] *Ibid.*, February 13, 1847.

[52] *Ibid.*, March 20, 1847.

ing to the anti-rent problem to the Committee on Grievances—"which produced a universal burst of applause."[53]

With nearly three terms as assemblyman behind him, Mike was at last playing ball with Tammany. In 1852 he was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore.[54] The same year he ran for Congress, backed by the Tammany Democrats who sought to capitalize on his continuing popularity with the rank and file. He was elected over Patrick Kelly in the general Democratic victory which ended a Whig administration and swept Franklin Pierce into the Presidency.

Although a novice in Congress, Walsh had decided opinions on national politics, as he did on almost anything. His admiration for John Tyler in 1842 had yielded during the forties to a glowing enthusiasm for John C. Calhoun until the Carolinian's death in 1850. As early as 1843, Walsh, physically protected by his Spartans, had proposed three cheers for Calhoun at a Van Buren rally![55]

Social reform was losing ground before the slavery question in the late forties. The "Barnburner" faction of New York Democrats espoused free-soil principles in opposition to the "Hunkers." Although Walsh opposed the extension of slavery he knew that Barnburners and Hunkers were distinguished mainly by their rivalry in seeking public offices. "I have always been regarded as the first, most determined and most formidable opponent of hunkerism," he explained:[56]

[53] *Ibid.*, January 23, 1847.

[54] The delegation shouted lustily but vainly for the nomination of Lewis Cass for President. Gustavus Myers, *History of Tammany Hall* (1917 ed.), 157.

[55] The managers of the rally had tried, unsuccessfully, to eject Walsh from the speakers' platform, where he sat as a reporter for his own paper. *Aurora*, September 26, 1843. We can only guess why Mike Walsh, the professed leader of the common people, admired and supported the best known defender of the slave system in the South. Mike loved men of principle, and Calhoun would not compromise his principles. Mike was an expansionist and hoped for the annexation of Texas in 1844, and Calhoun as Secretary of State had negotiated a treaty of annexation (which the Senate failed to support). Above all, in New York State the Democrats had split into two warring factions, the "Hunkers" and the "Barnburners," the latter led by Martin Van Buren, who was disliked by both Walsh and Calhoun.

[56] *Subterranean*, November 13, 1847.

To me they are indebted for the very expressive appellation by which they are now so universally known, and yet when I look upon some of the mercenary, grasping and unprincipled knaves who call themselves barnburners, I begin to fear that I may lose my identity as the radical leader, and become transformed through the legerdemain of these spurious pretenders into a regular hunker. The fact of the business is, there is not a particle of difference between the leaders of either faction.

For a time Walsh seems to have steered an independent course. As the Hunkers gained control of Tammany Hall, however, Mike forgot his earlier criticisms and sided with this faction.[57]

In his first year in the House of Representatives Walsh distinguished himself mainly by his frequent objections to procedure and by occasional humorous remarks. John W. Forney, the official clerk, later recalled that Mike was "a satirist by nature":

Nothing provoked him so much as a snob. He spared no pretender. He was especially severe upon the airs of chivalry of the South, and Democrat as he was, he had no patience with them. He never rose to speak without saying something new or odd. He read much and wrote strongly. . . . A sad man at times, nothing could exceed his bright humor on occasion.[58]

Walsh was always ready with some appropriate quip. A proposal to print more copies of a certain document evoked Walsh's suggestion that the demand "could be very easily supplied if every shopkeeper in Washington did not wrap up a pair of socks—" [cries of "Order!"][59] During the heated debate on the Kansas Nebraska question, Mike rose to ask:

whether it is proper for distinguished gentlemen, members of this House, to be seeking information by communion with the other world? [Laughter.] I understand that there has been a rule adopted by this House precluding the introduction of liquor, and I would like to know whether it is proper, in the face of that rule, to introduce spirits upon the Nebraska question, as they have been introduced down stairs, in a bar room there? [Great laughter.][60]

[57] Article on Mike Walsh, *Dictionary of American Biography*.

[58] John W. Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men*, Volume I (New York: 1873), 113.

[59] *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, p. 419. On another occasion, after an interminable debate, Walsh remarked: "This matter has been debated at such immense length that nobody understands it."—*Ibid.*, 405.

[60] *Ibid.*, 437.

As a ready debater Walsh won an early reputation. By his own admission he never prepared speeches in advance, and he made few long addresses. Usually he was on the watch for bills which seemed to him a waste of public money or which favored some special interest. In one instance he brazenly offered an amendment " for the completion of a light-house at Chittenango, Madison county, New York, $5,327.39." Amid an outburst of laughter, another congressman protested that lighthouses were not yet under consideration and that, further, there had been no previous appropriation for this particular lighthouse.

Mr. Walsh: It is a work of internal improvement.

The Chairman: The Chair would inquire of the gentleman from New York if there is any law providing for the construction of this work?

Mr. Walsh: I have not looked into the matter yet; but if there is not, it must have been a gross oversight. [Laughter.] A light-house there is quite as democratic and quite as necessary as two thirds of these log-rolling appropriations. If it is not necessary to protect the many valuable lives navigating the turbid waters of the Erie canal, it will, at least, put money into the pockets of some contractors. [Laughter.][61]

As a destructive critic Mike had no peer, and his alertness to chicanery made him something of a watchdog over the public treasury. He offered few constructive ideas. He spoke eloquently, however, in favor of raising the pay of enlisted men in the army; and when the House considered disapproving Utah's territorial laws, which permitted polygamy, he urged Congress to resort to reasonable persuasion rather than insult the Mormons by passing "narrow and contemptible legislation."[62]

Walsh staunchly defended the Democratic Party. Its principles were "as immutable as the laws that govern the universe itself." The abolitionists, Mike thought, were "insane, though perhaps not dishonest, fanatics." In national politics it was the free-soilers who were the real culprits. They were, he said:

[a] mean, despicable, and hollow-hearted set of hungry traitors who, at a pepper-and-salt convention, held in Buffalo in 1848, fraternized, with pertinacious assumption of well-dissembled sincerity, with disappointed

[61] *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, Part 2, p. 1691.
[62] *Ibid.*, 1097, 1956–1957.

and disloyal Whigs, rampant Abolitionists, and long-heeled Negroes, pampered by the traitorous artifices of demagogues, whose hearts and purposes were blacker than the faces of the poor dupes they were deluding in doing so.[63]

In a long and rambling speech on Kansas and the slavery question, Walsh slipped into the familiar wage-slave argument, popular among Democratic orators. The only difference between the Negro slave of the South and the white wage-slave of the North, he said, was that "the one has a master without asking for him, and the other has to beg for the privilege of becoming a slave. The one is the slave of an individual; the other is the slave of an inexorable class."[64]

Although he supported President Pierce's territorial policy, Mike tried to appear independent and criticized the Administration. For Pierce himself Walsh had "a very high degree of regard, more particularly if he were simply a citizen, and not a President. . . . He has always treated me with marked kindness and seeming confidence; but since I have ascertained that this is generally his disposition to everybody, I must be compelled to take off an extraordinary discount for the compliment to myself."[65]

While Walsh was in Congress the New York Democrats again split into two factions, the "Hard Shells" (or Hards) and the "Soft Shells" (or Softs). There was little or no difference in principle between the two, but uninformed politicians were confused. When an Alabama congressman asked what the difference was, Mike replied, "the difference between an honest man and a rogue." When asked which was the rogue, Walsh, himself a Hard, defined a Soft as one who never did anything for the Democrats except for his own personal advantage.

Walsh's thoughts turned to New York politics on another and more important matter—another term for himself in Congress. In the campaign of 1854 the Hard Shells nominated him for re-

[63] *Ibid.*, Part 1, p. 190.
[64] *Ibid.*, Part 2, p. 1232.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

election. The Soft Shells selected "Honest John" Kelly. The contest was bitter and exciting, and both factions campaigned furiously. Kelly won by a plurality of only fifteen votes.[66]

Charging that illegal votes had been cast in the Fourteenth Ward, Kelly's stronghold, Mike served notice that he would contest "Honest John's" seat. Kelly countered by obtaining a statement written by a friend of Walsh's father, asserting that the elder Walsh had never taken out naturalization papers and that the younger Walsh had not done so upon coming of age, hence Mike was not a citizen of the United States. When Kelly threatened to expose his rival, Walsh withdrew, and the contest ended.[67] Many years later Boss Tweed, then in jail, remarked that the only thing he ever did for Honest John Kelly was to help him beat Walsh for Congress.[68]

Undaunted by political defeat, Walsh embarked on a new adventure in behalf of George Steers, a well-known New York shipbuilder. Early in 1854, while still in the House of Representatives, Walsh had offered an amendment authorizing the building of naval vessels by contract with private individuals or firms. Praising Steers as "the Napoleon of American naval architecture," Mike had suggested him as one who might be selected by the Secretary of the Navy to build warships.[69] Although Walsh's particular amendment was defeated, Steers nevertheless was given a temporary appointment as Naval Constructor.[70]

[66] Of a total of 7,593 votes, Kelly received 3,068 and Walsh 3,053, the remaining votes going to lesser candidates. McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 151.

[67] Brief accounts are given in Breen, *op. cit.*, 304–305, and McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 151. Months before Kelly unseated Walsh in Congress, a memorial from "Citizens of the Fourth Congressional District of New York" had been presented in the House alleging that Mike was an alien, but no action against Walsh was taken on the ground that the memorial had been politically inspired. *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, p. 425.

[68] McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 23.

[69] *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, Part 2, pp. 829–830. Ridiculing the Committee on Naval Affairs, which opposed all amendments to the bill, Walsh said: "I have heard, Mr. Chairman, of the perfection of the ten commandments; I have heard of the perfection of the five orders of architecture; I have heard of the perfection of the Apollo Belvidere; I have heard of perfection in many other ways; but never till now have I heard of anything like perfection in a bill." *Ibid.*

[70] Frank M. Bennett, *The Steam Navy of the United States* (Pittsburgh: 1896), 151. It is not known when Walsh and Steers first met, but it must have been much earlier. Mike's son, born about 1839, was named George Steers Walsh.

Evidently the shipbuilder had great confidence in Walsh, for he is reputed to have hired the ex-congressman in 1855 to go as his agent to Russia and negotiate a contract for the building of ships for the Russian navy. He supplied Walsh with funds, procured letters of introduction from Secretary of the Navy James Dobbin and from prominent New York businessmen, and promised Mike a liberal commission if he were successful.[71] According to scattered bits of evidence, Walsh served at the same time as a secret agent for the United States Government, but we do not know his instructions, nor is it certain to what country (or countries) he was sent. One account relates that President Pierce sent him to England, where one of his services was "an exposure of the system of recruiting in the English Army, for which he accepted a shilling head money and went through the form of enlistment that prevailed at that time."[72]

Instead of carrying out his mission, whatever it was, Mike went on a big spree. He traveled widely, lived riotously, drank copiously, and spent all his money. While in Berlin he was saddened to learn of the death of his daughter. Traveling eastward to Russia and the Crimea, he visited the camps of the contending powers in the Crimean War. He made his way from Sebastopol to Constantinople, where he arrived penniless and without suitable clothing. As a guest of the American Minister, Carroll Spence, Walsh charmed the diplomatic circle with his genial nature, dry and irresistible humor, and fund of anecdotes.[73] Finally he went to England and embarked at Liverpool as a steerage pas-

[71] Breen, *op. cit.*, 306–307; McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 152. There seems to be no direct evidence of this mission. An examination of the records of the Navy Department in the National Archives reveals much correspondence between Dobbin and Steers, mostly relating to Steers' appointment as Naval Constructor and to the building of the U.S.S. *Niagara*, but there are no letters to Walsh, nor is any reference made to him in the correspondence with Steers.

[72] Unnamed newspaper clipping, with pencilled date of 1892, pasted inside the cover of *Sketches of the Speeches and Writings of Michael Walsh* (New York: 1843) in the Kilroe Collection, Columbia University Library. The New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859, stated that his mission had been to Russia; Breen (*op. cit.*, 305) says that he was "in such high favor at Washington as to be chosen by Secretary of State Marcy as confidential agent to England and Mexico." The New York *Dispatch*, July 3, 1858, noted that Walsh had arrived from Mexico with a special message for the United States Government.

[73] Forney, *op. cit.*, 113–114.

senger for America. He arrived in New York, "broken in health, a mere wreck of his former self."[74]

The remainder of Walsh's life is shrouded in mystery. According to an obituary article, he became an agent of certain Southern filibusters, on whose behalf he visited Mexico in 1858. It is certain that he was in Mexico, but whether his trip was in behalf of filibusters, or to negotiate another shipbuilding contract, or as a special mission for the United States Government is an unanswered question.[75] His journey apparently having been unsuccessful, Walsh was back in New York City early in 1859.

We know virtually nothing of Walsh's private affairs. His collected stanzas of verse are trite and sentimental, revealing little about their author, though a whimsical piece, "To my Watch in the Pawnbroker's," could have been written at almost any time during his life.[76] Most important to Walsh was companionship. His personal magnetism made him the life of the party, whether at Manus Kelly's, at Dunn's Sixth Ward Hotel (for a time the headquarters of the Spartan Band), or at the Hone House. There, with Tom Hyer, the prizefighter, and other "low company," Mike swapped stories, played practical jokes, and drank copiously of "lemonade." Liquor was a well-known Walsh weakness. It seems that in 1844 George Henry Evans cajoled him into taking a temperance pledge, but this was undoubtedly the shortest phase of Mike's life. Within a year Walsh referred to teetotalers and Sabbatarians as "miserable puritanical zealots."[77] Now, after his succession of failures, he turned more and more to drink.

[74] Breen, *op. cit.*, 307; McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 152; Forney, *op. cit.*, 113–114; New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859.

[75] New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859. Breen, *op. cit.*, 305, says Walsh was a confidential agent of the Government. See also New York *Dispatch*, July 7, 1858. An unnamed newspaper clipping, *op. cit.*, states that he "went to Central America, sent by President Buchanan on a mission connected with Nicaragua and other troubles." The sketch of Walsh in the *Dictionary of American Biography* implies that he tried to negotiate a shipbuilding contract with the Mexican government, but this seems unlikely, as George Steers had died in 1856.

[76] *Sketches of the Speeches and Writings of Michael Walsh*, 52.

[77] *Subterranean*, October 4, 1845. In Congress he drew laughs by moving that a

In March 1859 the newspapers announced the sudden death of Mike Walsh. His body had been found by a policeman at 5:30 A.M. in an area-way of a millinery store on Eighth Avenue near Sixteenth Street. At first it was thought he had been murdered, but no perceptible marks of violence were found on the body except a slight scalp wound.

Walsh had been enjoying a convivial evening with several friends at a couple of Broadway saloons. The party had broken up at about two in the morning. According to all accounts Mike was not drunk when he started for home. He was, to be sure, under the influence of liquor, but his friends said that he had often been in a worse condition after drinking.[78] He could have slipped and fallen in the fatal area-way, but he might have been pushed. The suspicion of foul play remained. At the coroner's inquest the jury delivered this verdict:[79]

> That the said Mike Walsh came to his death by apoplexy, produced from being precipitated down the steps of the area . . . on the morning of the 17th of March; and we are further of the opinion that, from the absence of his watch and chain, which was [*sic*] in his possession when last seen by his friends, and other circumstances, that violence was resorted to by some person or persons unknown.

So died one of the most colorful characters ever to grace the barrooms of New York. "Nobody exactly understood him; he did not understand himself. Spite of his undeniable ability, nobody highly respected him; and, spite of his many errors, everybody liked him."[80] A gifted man, lacking modesty, discrimination and self-control, Walsh was in some ways typical of the America of his time—and perhaps of ours.

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naval appropriation bill be amended to forbid the purchase of intoxicating beverages. He also objected to a petition from the New York State Temperance Alliance to authorize the city of Washington to ban the sale of liquor. *Congressional Globe*, 33 Congress, 1 Session, Vol. XXVIII, Part 3, pp. 1737, 1920.

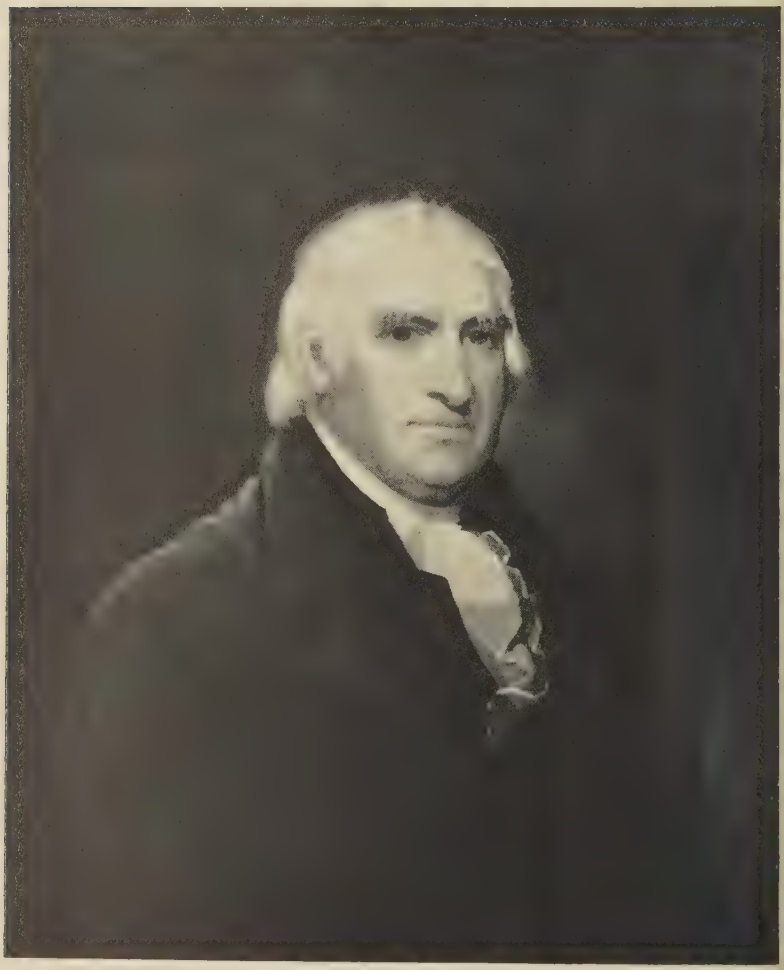
[78] A full account is given in the New York *Herald*, March 18, 1859. Walsh's home at the time was at 208 West 21st Street.

[79] *Ibid.*, March 19, 1859. Mike was survived by his wife, Catherine Wiley (or Riley), who seems to have been stoically loyal to her husband to the end; and by two children, George Steers, aged 20, and Catharine, aged 15.

[80] Breen, *op. cit.*, 303.

THE LATER LIFE AND WORK OF EZRA AMES

by THEODORE BOLTON *and* IRWIN F. CORTELYOU



GEORGE CLINTON (1739–1812)
By Ezra Ames, dated by Account Book, 1818
Owned by Dr. George Clinton Andrews

FIRST SUCCESS AS AN ARTIST, 1812–1816:

PORTRAITS OF GEORGE CLINTON, A FEW LANDSCAPES, BANK DIRECTOR

AT THE Second Annual Exhibition of the Society of Artists of the United States and the Pennsylvania Academy, held at Philadelphia in 1812, Ezra Ames exhibited two portraits:[1] No. 24, "Portrait of a Gentleman," which has not been identified; and No. 193, "George Clinton Esq late Vice-president of the United States," which is no longer extant for reasons presently to be discussed.

To judge from the supposed replicas, the portrait of George Clinton was a veritable show-piece. It represented a very prominent citizen of forceful character; and it must have been a striking likeness and a fine artistic work because of the impression it made on the officers of the Academy, and on the critics. In a critical review of the exhibition, dated June 15, 1812, and appearing in *The Port Folio* for July 1812, the writer, who identifies himself only with the initials "G.M.," paused at length before the picture painted by Ames:

"No. 193, *is a portrait of the late vice president, by Ames of Albany*. In reviewing this picture we are equally pleased and astonished, as well at the excellence of the picture, and the correctness of the likeness, as that it was painted by a person little known as an artist, and who has never had any regular instructions in his art, and but few opportunities of even seeing the works of others. The genius and strength of his own mind have, however, produced a picture that no artist need be ashamed of; and it may not be improper to remark, that he only exhibits this as an earnest of what he intends to do hereafter. This artist adds one star more to the constellation of American genius."[2]

[1] Society of Artists of the United States and the Pennsylvania Academy, *Second Annual Exhibition*, catalogue 1812, pp. 17, 35.

[2] *Port Folio*, 1812, p. 25.

A brief but no less laudatory notice appeared in the *Philadelphia Gazette:* "In reviewing this picture the friends of the deceased will be gratified with the correctness of the likeness and will be no less delighted with the beauty of the painting."[3]

The result of these, and doubtless other, favorable impressions of the portrait was an unusual action, at that time, on the part of the officials of the Pennsylvania Academy: they bought the picture for their permanent collection. In a letter to Ames, dated July 6, 1812, John Vallance, the Keeper of the Academy, wrote, in part: "A circumstance extremely flattering to you is, that this is the *first* picture the Academy ever purchased. . . . This will read well on there [*sic*] minutes and will tell well among your friends. . . ."[4]

Curiously enough, in the letter there is no mention of the title of the picture. However, it is specifically recorded in the minutes of the Academy for July 13, 1812: "Messrs Rush and Gibson were appointed a committee to purchase the portrait of Mr. Clinton, now in the Academy, at the price fixed by Mr. [Bass] Otis, said to be $80."[5]

The portrait, although then the property of the Academy, was listed in the catalogue of the annual exhibition held during the next year. A reviewer in *The Port Folio*, for August 1813, signing himself "M" and presumably the same "G.M." who had reviewed the exhibition for the same magazine in 1812, made this report: "24. *The portrait of George Clinton, esq. late vice-president of the United States.*—Ames. This very excellent picture was exhibited and much admired in the last exhibition. It has been since purchased from the artist, by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts."[6]

Thereafter the portrait is listed in many of the exhibition catalogues up to and including the one for the year 1845 when it was

[3] Munsell, V (1854): 33.

[4] Wheeler, *American Collector*, August 1947, p. 7.

[5] *MS Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Correspondence*, letter from Mrs. Barbara S. Roberts, Registrar, to Dr. George Clinton Andrews, March 22, 1949.

[6] *Port Folio*, 1813, p. 127.

in the "Directors' Room."[7] In 1845 the Academy building was destroyed by fire. According to the Registrar of the Academy in a letter dated March 22, 1949: "A partial search of later catalogues after 1845 shows no mention of the painting being in the collection of the Academy. It has been presumed, (although it is not specifically mentioned in any lists so far found of works destroyed in the fire) that it must have been lost in the fire of 1845."[8]

Despite this reasonable assumption, claims have been made for two very similar half-length standing portraits of George Clinton, both undoubtedly by Ames, that each is the original of the portrait sent to the exhibition of 1812. One is privately owned in New York City; and the other is at The New-York Historical Society. Both claims are based on undocumented statements. The claim made for the version at The New-York Historical Society, published in the 1941 catalogue of American portraits at the Society,[9] has recently been withdrawn since the present writers have identified the portrait with the one recorded by the artist in his Account Book during 1814.[10] A third half-length standing portrait of George Clinton, similar in most respects to the other two, painted for the Common Council of the City of Albany, is now on loan at the Albany Institute of History and Art.[11]

The portrait of George Clinton exhibited in 1812 and presumably destroyed by fire in 1845, has often been referred to as a full-length picture,[12] but after considerable search no document has been found which would prove that this is correct. It has also been recorded as a bust portrait in an old acquisition book of the Pennsylvania Academy, entitled Academy Records, No. 6, as follows: "Bust of George Clinton [acquired] by B[ass] Otis purchased of the artist [Ezra Ames] price $80. July 16, 1812."[13]

[7] Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, *Catalogue*, 1845, p. 13.

[8] *MS Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Correspondence, op. cit.*

[9] Shelley, 57.

[10] A discussion of this portrait is given on pp. 22–23, *NYHS Quart.*, January 1951.

[11] *Magazine of Art*, Albany Institute Edition, April 1948.

[12] *DAB*, I: 243.

[13] *MS Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Correspondence, op. cit.*

However, it is difficult to believe that the portrait was either a bust or a full-length. It was probably not a bust portrait because, with one exception, the price was over three times as much as Ames had recorded for a picture up to that time, which indicates something over a bust-sized likeness. On the other hand, it was probably not a full-length because the artist's only portraits of this size located so far, are the two in the Executive Chamber of the New York State Capitol, and these reveal the artist's ineptitude rather than his ability as an artist. It seems highly probable that in selecting a size for a picture to display his talents, he would have decided upon neither a bust portrait, which would not make much of a showing at an exhibition, nor a full-length portrait, which he would find difficult to manage; but, rather, a half-length standing portrait. In short, having painted such a show-piece as the half-length standing portrait of Henry Jones, it may be imagined that he then went on to paint another show-piece the same size, but, as it has been suggested, of an important person: George Clinton whose services to the nation made him a prominent character, and whose recent death made the portrait of him a timely picture for exhibition purposes. Therefore, the portrait exhibited in 1812 was presumably similar to the several extant half-length standing portraits of the statesman.

One of these, owned by The New-York Historical Society, is a striking artistic performance in spite of its conventional background. It is skillfully painted, the pose is natural, and the characterization is lifelike and convincing. If the portrait exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy was indeed the prototype of this painting, then it must have made a handsome showing at the exhibition.

Since it was not a commission, the portrait of George Clinton, exhibited in 1812, is not listed in the artist's Account Books, where he recorded only those items for which payment was due him at the time of entry. These Account Books are, as it has frequently been remarked, incomplete as lists of the artist's work; nor is a complete listing of all his paintings attempted in this

biographical essay. A complete tabulation of his work is attempted in the Catalogue at the end of this study.*

Here, as heretofore and hereinafter, the attempt is made simply to present a survey of the artist's work. Therefore, it is sufficient, usually, to state only the number of portraits which he recorded each year in his Account Books; and to refer only in a general way to the work which he did not record, but which has been identified. However, here and there, certain paintings which serve to illustrate some characteristic of the artist's work will be noted more or less in detail.

In 1812, Ames noted the painting of eight portraits, but he did not record four extant portraits belonging to this year or to this period. Two of them, bust portraits of John Maley and his wife which form part of a collection of several portraits by Ames decorating the walls of the owner's handsome drawing room in Loudonville, near Albany, N. Y., are specifically dated 1812. The other two unrecorded portraits, exceptionally fine character studies of James Kent, may be assigned to this period because the heads in these portraits, almost identical likenesses, are of a man about forty-nine years old which was the judge's age in 1812.

We now come to a discussion of the rare landscapes of Ezra Ames. During the year 1812, he recorded, in his third Account Book, the painting of two views of Lake George: one for James Kane, which has not come to light; and the other for John Tayler, a wood panel which has recently been located. Later on in his Account Book, in 1822, he recorded altering a view of Lake George for James Caldwell, which has been identified as a wood panel, privately owned.

The recently located view of Lake George painted for John Tayler, shows, in the foreground, a fort built on a hollow square design; and a lake, with a village, mountains, and sky in the background. On the ramparts of the fort are some small figures. The other located view of Lake George, altered in 1822, is similar to the panel painted in 1812, except that it does not have the fort in

* To appear in book form.

PERSPECTIVE PAINTING OF LAKE GEORGE (WITH THE FORT)
By Ezra Ames, dated by Account Book, 1812
(Photographed by Irwin F. Cortelyou)
Owned by Mrs. Weeks Stewart

the foreground. The discovery of the view with the fort reveals the nature of the alteration. Comparing photographs of the two views it is now obvious that the fort, originally in both pictures, has been painted over in the Caldwell version. Dim perspective lines of the fort show through the overpainting.

The lower margin of the Caldwell picture is lettered: "A VIEW OF LAKE GEORGE & CALDWELL VILLAGE taken from the west side of the fort." An inscription is on the back of the panel: "W^m^ Caldwell / A[l]bany / Taken by Ezra Ames / from Fort George / By request of my Father who took him / to the Lake to make this view." Since the picture was painted on the site, possibly the other two views, recorded in

VIEW OF LAKE GEORGE AND CALDWELL VILLAGE (WITHOUT FORT)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1812 (Photo by FARL)
[Fort overpainted, presumably the "alteration" noted in Account Book, 1822]
Owned by Miss Catharine Van Cortlandt Mathews and Mrs. William V. Mason

1812, were based on this direct transcript from nature. If this be true, then the picture must have been painted during, or even before, the year 1812.

An unrecorded landscape of a different type is at the Albany Institute. It was presented by Miss Elizabeth S. Edwards, the artist's great-granddaughter, who entitled it "The Lady of the Lake." However, when it was exhibited at the Chicago Art Institute and the Whitney Museum of American Art during 1945, it was listed in the catalogues as a "Romantic Landscape."[34] It is a picture of a woman draped in white who stands at the prow of a boat floating on a mountain lake or stream. In the middle distance

[34] Sweet, 115.

ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE

By Ezra Ames

Owned by the Albany Institute of History and Art

there is a Gothic castle on top of a cliff; in the background, a mountain range. The painting cannot be dated by its technique because there are no dated paintings by Ames of a similar type with which it may be compared. A tentative date has been suggested by Mr. Frederick A. Sweet who mentions the picture as one of the "occasional examples" of landscape painting "produced under the unsympathetic conditions which prevailed in this country before 1825. . . ."[15]

In his recent book on the American arts, Mr. Oliver W. Larkin refers to the "Romantic Landscape" when he writes: "Ezra Ames of Albany seems to have anticipated Cole's *Voyage* [*of Life*] with a rather crudely painted allegory. . . ."[16] This conjec-

[15] *Ibid.*, 28.

[16] Larkin, 203.

ture is more than probable. The four small panels at the Albany Institute, comprising the preliminary sketches for the "Voyage of Life" by Thomas Cole, were painted in 1839–1840,[17] whereas a painting entitled "Voyage of Life" is listed in the tabulation of Ames's work found in the inventory of his estate made in 1836, after his death. Indeed, the picture, variously called "Romantic Landscape" (the title used by the writers in their Catalogue), "Allegorical Landscape," and "The Lady of the Lake," may at one time have been called "Voyage of Life" by Ames himself. Mr. Sweet, in a sentence following immediately after the one previously quoted, states: "Thomas Cole's Voyage of Life elaborates on the theme used in Ames' Romantic Landscape." Assuming that the picture was painted "before 1825," and accepting the date, 1812, for the views of Lake George, then these landscapes have an historic significance: they are anticipations, respectively, of the romantic and realistic paintings of the Hudson River School.

Three other allegorical pictures are listed in the tabulation of the artist's paintings in the inventory: an "Allegory of Providence," an "Allegory of Faith & Death," and an "Allegory present past & future."[18] Still another allegorical landscape is listed in the artist's Account Book, during 1819, entitled "alegorical Painting," and charged to William Barclay for Temple Lodge. These are all as yet unlocated.

Turning now to the artist's miscellaneous and ornamental work, dated 1812, which he recorded in his third Account Book: after an examination of the entries one gains the impression that by this time Ames was inclined to accept such commissions only from friends, or societies in which he had a personal interest, unless they involved returns large enough to be an incentive. Thus he recorded the payments due him for five stands of colors, one of them for I. and G. Hutton; a stand of colors and thirteen banners for the Washington Benevolent Society of Washington County; three portrait frames, two for "P. S. Van Rensselaer,"

[17] Sweet, 118.

[18] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. 1.

and another for "P. Van Cortlandt"; and fifteen sashes for the St. Andrews Society.

The next reference to the artist in point of time is found in a letter of the year 1813 to the artist from a friend named Benjamin Armitage, who lived in New York City. This letter, and another dated 1816 which will be quoted later on, reveal him as a man very actively interested in the artist's work. Armitage in his letter headed New York, January 21, 1813,[19] begins:

> I have often wished to have a line from you since your return to Albany and having an opportunity of forwarding a line to you I embrace it with pleasure.
>
> Pray how are you coming on in Albany? Mr. Waldo is (I understand) painting Naval Heroes and you ought to be painting Army Heroes.

The painter to whom Armitage refers is Samuel Lovett Waldo (1783–1861),[20] with whose work some of the portraits by Ames have been confused.

"There is no foreseeing what is to come," Armitage continues, "but several of your well wishers are of opinion had you staid here you would by this time have been as Waldo is viz you would have had as much work as you could wish for." This leads Armitage to speak of the War of 1812, then still waging; and of the chances one had of earning a living as an artist during war-time conditions:

> At first view it would appear that at a time of War no reasonable man would (in such a place as New York) lay out his money for pictures, portraits &c but when you come to consider how few men in a Community are men who merit the title of *Reasonable Men* & that if all men were truly under the direction of Reason there would be very few Wars; I say when you take these things into consideration, is it to be wondered at that when the first apprehension we experienced in New York from the War was a little worn off & we had seen a few valuable Ships bro[t] in as Prizes we began to hug ourselves as being in little danger & all our old habits returned upon us as if Peace was returned to us & the War at an end.

[19] *MS Ames and Others*, No. 1, January 21, 1813.

[20] *DAB*, XIX: 333–334.

Armitage concludes:

I occasionally fall in with Sylvanus Miller the Surrogate & some days ago he asked me if I tho[t] you would ever send him the portrait of the Vice President [George Clinton] he ordered & I told him I tho[t] you would send it to him:—If you send it to my care in the Spring please write to him stating the price and ordering the Amt. paid to me on your Acct. and send the letter under cover to me & I will deliver the letter and (if you say so will) keep the portrait until it is paid for—

One gathers from this letter that Armitage and Ames were friends of long standing; that Armitage out of admiration for Ames and his work acted as a self-appointed agent for the artist in New York City; and that he was regretful because Ames had not settled in New York. But Ames, once having made the decision to settle in Albany, probably never gave a second thought to leaving his adopted city where he was well established and busy filling out commissions. Two of these were public commissions for full-length portraits: one of George Washington, the other of George Clinton, and they were destined for the State House. Both were painted in 1813, and both are today in the Executive Chamber of the State Capitol at Albany.

A transcript of the resolution adopted by the State Assembly authorizing the appointment of a committee to call on Ames and then report to the House concerning the "propriety" of having him paint the portrait of Washington, is found in a letter written by James Van Ingen to Ames dated April 3, 1813.[21] The document dated April 2, 1813, states in part:

Resolved unanimously, that a Committee of seven members be appointed to confer with our ingenious and accomplished fellow-citizen and artist Mr. Ezra Ames, and report to this House, their opinion on the propriety of procuring from him, a full length portrait of General George Washington late President of the United States, for the purpose of having the same placed above the Speaker's Chair; and that M[r] Taylor, M[r] Jones, M[r] Sears, M[r] Cady, M[r] Dox, M[r] E. Williams, and M[r] Van Vechten be the said Committee.

On the same sheet with this transcript Van Ingen addresses himself to Ames: "I deem it proper to apprize you that the fore-

[21] *MS Ames and Others*, No. I, April 3, 1813.

going resolution passed the house of assembly yesterday and I expect the Committee appointed thereby, will call on you this afternoon—[April 3]."

The full-length portrait of George Washington, painted as a result of that call, may have been based on the engraving by Heath after the "Lansdowne Portrait" of Washington by Gilbert Stuart.[22] This is more plausible than assuming that Ames made a direct copy of the painting itself which was then, and is now, in Philadelphia.[23] In fairness to Stuart and to Ames it should be stated that the Heath engraving is an indifferent copy of the portrait.

Authorization for the "purchase of a full length portrait" of George Clinton, as well as for the portrait of George Washington, is found in the "Laws of the State of New York," 1813, of the 36th Session of the Legislature, begun November 2, 1812, passed April 13, 1813.[24] The portrait of Clinton was paid for by the Comptroller during that year and hung in the State House in December 1813.[25] The two portraits are companion paintings of the same size.

The portraits were more than satisfactory. In 1823, when they were no longer novelties, they still held the public attention, and Horatio Gates Spafford felt impelled to write with uncritical enthusiasm that "in the Assembly Chamber, there is an admirable full length portrait of Washington, by Ames, of Albany, and in the Senate Chamber, one of George Clinton, unrivalled in faithfulness, and unexcelled in execution."[26] In *The New York Times* for November 28, 1937, the late Edward Alden Jewell, a less enthusiastic reviewer than Horatio Gates Spafford, wrote of the artist and of the picture of George Clinton, at the time it was shown at a loan exhibition of portraits at the Corcoran Gallery of Art:

[22] Frankenstein and Healy, *Art in America*, February 1950, p. 26.

[23] Park, II: 854–855.

[24] *N. Y. State Laws, 1813*, Chapter CCIII, p. 326; Section XXXVIII, 335, for Washington portrait; XLVII, 337, for Clinton portrait.

[25] Bowen, 439.

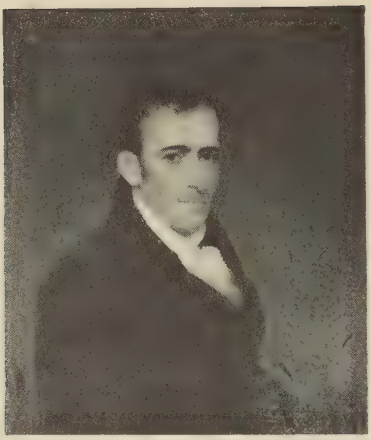
[26] Munsell, I (1850): 308–309.

> . . . take an American artist who whole-heartedly and lavishly subscribes to the English rococo manner and see what can happen. Take the huge portrait of George Clinton by Ezra Ames. Here is an American artist who, helped to some extent, no doubt, by fortune, but also depending optimistically upon his own bootstraps, rises above the profession of coach painter to that of the painter of important official portraits. His opulence with respect to embellishment is almost staggering. The property room of a provincial artist's mind has been completely denuded for the occasion. And it looks as if a last-minute pinch of snuff had blown the whole elaborate mise-en-scene into a state bordering on bright chaos.

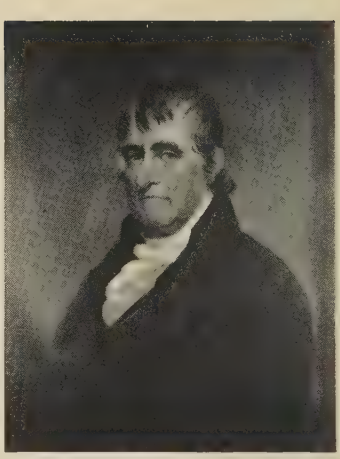
The artist fell down lamentably in his painting of the legs and feet, identically placed in both portraits although the figures face in opposite directions. Nevertheless, they gave satisfaction to the citizens; gained prestige for the artist; and brought him commissions so that now, in his forty-sixth year, he was able to turn down small painting jobs. The only large order for ornamental painting which he recorded in his Account Book, during 1813, was the painting of eight banners, at $5 each, for a branch of the Washington Benevolent Society in Pittsfield; and two for each branch in the counties of Albany and Ontario. The painting of a frame; and a stand of colors for Philip Van Rensselaer, completes his record for the year. His record of miscellaneous work for the ensuing years is even smaller. In 1814 the only small work he recorded is a frame charged to Ambrose Spencer for a portrait of General Armstrong; and in 1815, a frame, a sign, and a coat of arms—the latter for a family named Platt.

By the year 1813, then, one may infer that Ames considered himself primarily a painter of portraits. Indeed, his name, profession, and address appear in the first Albany Directory, published in 1813, doubtless as he himself reported this information to the compilers of that work, as "Ames, Ezra, portrait painter, 41 Washington." The name of the street, as noted earlier, was changed in 1814 to South Pearl. His profession is given as "portrait painter" in all the directories of the city thereafter as long as he lived.

During 1813, besides the seven portraits he recorded in his



GEORGE W. CLINTON (1778–1818)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1813
(Photo: Irwin F. Cortelyou)
Owner: Dr. George Clinton Andrews



JOHN TAYLER (1742–1829)
By Ezra Ames, signed and dated 1816
(Photo by FARL)
Owner: Historical Society of the Tarrytowns

Account Book, he probably painted some of the located portraits which he did not record. He certainly painted the two full-length portraits of Washington and George Clinton for the city in that year. However, there is no telling when he painted the extant bust and half-length standing portraits of George Clinton which he did not record. If they were based on the likeness painted in 1812 for the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts exhibition, they may have been painted any time during or after that year.

There is a bust portrait of George Clinton's only son, George Washington Clinton, formerly attributed to Vanderlyn, which Ames painted about 1813, judging from the apparent age of the sitter. Ames did not record the portrait in his Account Book of this period, but it is listed in the certified inventory of his estate[27] and in the handbill of the sale of his portraits in 1842, several years after his death.[28]

[27] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. 1.
[28] [Ames, Ezra], *Catalogue Sale of Portraits*, 1842.

In this portrait the artist has placed the sitter within a very faintly indicated oval which forms a painted mat, a substitute for the gilt mat used in framing pictures. This conventional device is employed to center the attention of the spectator on the head and shoulders of the sitter. Ames had used the device before this time, as for example in his portraits of Elihu Phinney, in 1799; of Solomon Southwick, painted about 1804; of Spencer Stafford, painted in 1807; and, at times, he used it later on, as for example in his portrait of Marcus Tullius Reynolds, painted about 1821, which the portrait of George Washington Clinton greatly resembles.

In 1814 the artist entered the banking business. According to the minutes of the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank of Albany, on June 6, 1814, at the annual meeting of the stockholders, Ezra Ames was elected one of the thirteen directors.[29] It is possible that the bust portrait he painted of himself, owned by the bank, was painted this year.

In 1814 the bank, chartered in 1811 and the third to be established at Albany, had moved into a handsome marble building on the northeast corner of Court and Exchange Streets where it remained until 1875. It was then installed in its present quarters on State Street. Solomon Southwick had served as the first president of the bank from 1811 to 1813, and Isaac Hutton was serving as second president when Ames became one of the directors in 1814.[30] Twenty years later Ames himself rose to the position of president of this bank.

Beginning in August of the year before, 1813, Ames raised his price for a bust portrait with its frame from $45 to $50. For the half-length standing portrait of George Clinton with its frame, painted in 1814, he charged $150.[31] It is true that the price was large but so was the portrait. Furthermore, only once thereafter

[29] *MS Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, Minutes*, consulted by Mr. George B. Cortelyou, Jr.

[30] Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, *Span of a Century*.

[31] This is the portrait at The New-York Historical Society and is discussed at pp. 22–23, *NYHS Quart.*, January 1951.

did the artist record a charge of $150 for a portrait with its frame, and this was in 1818 when he painted the half-length standing portrait of Governor DeWitt Clinton for the City of Albany. After 1813, his average price was $50 for an average-sized portrait with its frame.

A receipt documenting a portrait for which Ames received $60, including the frame, is dated September 18, 1815, and is made out to Pierre Van Cortlandt II for a portrait painted of his "Lady," presumably his second wife, who was Anne Stevenson. It is a family tradition that Anne Stevenson sat for the artist while he finished the bust of the profile portrait of Van Cortlandt's first wife, Catharine Clinton, who had died in 1811 before her portrait was finished.[32] This profile is now at the Museum of the City of New York, where there is also a profile miniature of her by Ames which resembles the oil portrait. A portrait of Pierre Van Cortlandt II, himself, by Ames may also belong to the year 1815 because the costume of the sitter dates from about that year.

Portraits of or about this year, which Ames did not record, include: portraits of Philo Ruggles and his wife, at Columbia University; of General Thomas Humphrey Cushing and his wife, privately owned; of Matthias B. Tallmadge and of his wife, owned by Yale University and on loan at the English Speaking Union, New York City; of John Hankinson and of his wife, who was the daughter of Mrs. Thomas Humphrey Cushing; and of Mrs. Ebenezer Foot. Then there is a copy, at the Albany Institute, which Ames made of the original portrait of Robert R. Livingston by Gilbert Stuart, which dates from this period. A resolution to have the copy painted is mentioned in the minutes, March 10, 1814, of The Society for the Promotion of Useful Arts, a forerunner of the present Albany Institute of History and Art. Livingston had been president of the Society. In the minutes of February 28, 1815, the portrait is referred to as having been "procured."[33] Although Ames is not mentioned in the minutes in

[32] Information supplied by Miss Catharine Van Cortlandt Mathews.

[33] *MS The Society for the Promotion of Useful Arts, Minutes*, consulted by Mr. Ledyard Cogswell, Jr.

this connection; he is mentioned in the minutes under the date of March 2, 1814, as elected chairman of the Fine Arts Committee of the Society,[34] which supports the assumption that it was Ames who painted the copy. But no such documentary support is actually needed because the portrait is quite evidently the work of Ames.

Reverting to his original work at this time: although for a number of years he had not recorded the painting of any miniatures, a miniature on an oval-shaped piece of ivory of his wife Zipporah, owned by Miss Elizabeth S. Edwards, may be assigned to about the year 1815, because of the apparent age of the sitter. Age and costume are the only criteria available for dating his miniatures because the techniques used by the artist in miniature painting are not sufficiently known to assign his miniatures to specific dates for technical reasons.

Aside from these artistic occupations, Ames, who never forewent his Masonic activities, continued to receive demonstrations of esteem from the members of this fraternity. According to Mr. E. T. Reid, he was: "chosen as the Grand Captain General of the Grand Encampment of the State of New York in June 1816, and reelected in 1817, 1818 and 1819. In the General Grand Encampment of the United States of America he was elected General Grand Captain General in June 1816, and reelected on September 16, 1819. Thus the Knights Templar demonstrated their respect for his skill and ability."[35]

A novelty appears in the artist's Account Book records for 1816: a lottery sign for S. & M. Allen whom he charged $100 for the work. The firm of S. & M. Allen managed all kinds of lotteries at their "Allen's Truly Lucky Lottery Office" which they advertised prominently in *The Albany Register* for April 29, 1817, and numerous other issues of that newspaper during the period.

During the year 1816, Ames also recorded in his third Account Book the painting of eight portraits. Several of these have been

[34] *MS The Society for the Promotion of Useful Arts, Minutes,* consulted by Mr. Robert G. Wheeler.

[35] Reid, 11–12.

located. Two of them, one of John Tayler at the Philipse Castle Restoration, Tarrytown, and the other of Absalom Townsend, privately owned, are boldly painted against simple backgrounds. Two others, in contrast, the privately owned portraits of John Meads and Mrs. John Meads, are meticuluously painted with background accessories. The portraits of Absalom Townsend and Mrs. John Meads are especially fine characterizations and rank with the best of the artist's productions.

In 1816, Ames was in his forty-eighth year. That he was now active as a banker, Freemason, and artist, is not surprising, for men in those days were apt to have more than one active interest. What is noteworthy in the case of Ezra Ames is that he finally reached the top in all three of his main interests. It is especially remarkable that he continued to develop his abilities as a painter. That he might have gained wider recognition as an artist had he so desired, one may deduce from an invitation to display his work in New York City which he received in 1816. This invitation came in the form of a letter, now at the Albany Institute, from his friend Benjamin Armitage in New York City,[30] who, it may be recalled, had previously interested himself in the artist's behalf.

New York Sep^{r} 27th 1816

M^{r} Ezra Ames
Dear Sir

You no doubt have seen in our New York Papers that the Academy of Fine Arts are going to have an Exhibition in their New Rooms next month & invite Artists to send Specimens of their works to be shewn.

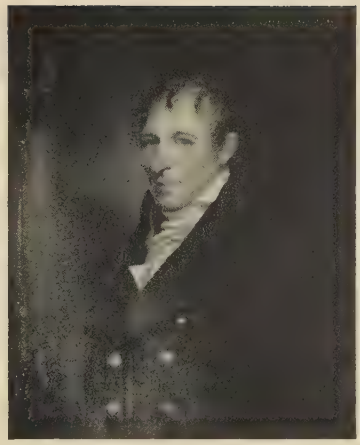
I trust you will make up your mind to send something of yours amongst other works of this State & that you will at once send me down the sizes of Paintings which you will furnish & I will without loss of time make application for Room to be reserved for them & wait their arrival here, and this done wait for the pleasure of seeing you as one of my family, that you may see & be seen amongst the Artists of our State, for Pennsylvania has too long boasted of being the only one in the Union that had any Painters in it to boast of—

Give my Compliments to all your Family & believe me yours truly

Benj^{n} Armitage

[30] *MS Armitage, Benjamin*, letter to Ezra Ames, September 27, 1816. Reference and photostat of letter supplied by Miss Helen Burr Smith.

MRS. JOHN MEADS (b. 1785)



JOHN MEADS (1777–1859)

By Ezra Ames, Acct. Bk. dates, 1816 (Photos: Irwin F. Cortelyou)

Owner: Mr. Joseph Larocque, Jr.

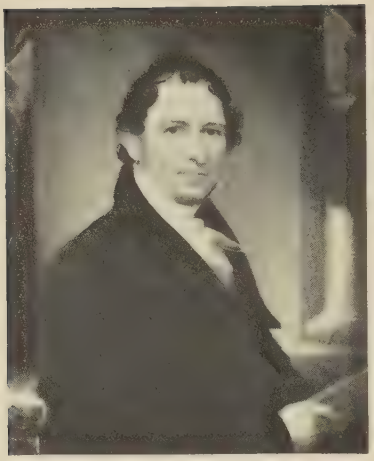
P.S. Mr Oakey desires me to say that if you conclude to come down, he wishes you to bring with you your Box of tricks, Palletts, Brushes &c &c so as to be prepared for Action as Mrs Oakey wants her Portrait & he thinks he can get one or more Good, hard, Strong Faces amongst his Friends; he wishes you to write me saying what you determine upon—

Yours &c

B. A———.

Ames's reply to this letter has not been located which is unfortunate because the artist failed to display his work at the first exhibition of the revived American Academy of the Fine Arts which opened on October 25, 1816,[37] and it would be interesting to know why. Nor did he display his work at any of the subsequent exhibitions although, as hereinafter related, he was elected a member of the American Academy in 1824. At present the matter remains a mystery; and the only other reference worth recording for the year 1816 is the artist's memorandum that $720 covered his entire expenses for the year extending from January 1, 1816, to January 1, 1817.

[37] Cummings, 7.



CLARKSON CROLIUS (1805–1887)

By Ezra Ames, signed and dated, 1825

The New-York Historical Society

Gift of Clarkson Crolius, Jr., 1863

SOLOMON VAN RENSSELAER (1774–1852) (Photo by FARL)

By Ezra Ames, Acct. Bk. date, 1819

Owners: Miss Emily W. and Mr. Edward E. Rankin

STEPHEN VAN RENSSELAER (1764–1839)

By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1818–1825 (Photo by Macbeth Gallery)

Owned by New York State Historical Association

FURTHER RECOGNITION, 1817–1825:

WORK FOR JOSEPH DELAPLAINE, PORTRAIT OF DEWITT CLINTON, AMES AT ERIE CANAL CEREMONIES

AMES began the year 1817 by painting some Masonic regalia for which he was very well paid. According to his entry in the Albany Account Book, dated January 16, 1817, he charged John T. Dotty $260 for a breastplate, mitre, crown, and robes "Compleat for the High Priest, King & Scribe," for the Richmond Chapter. Then, on April 22, 1817, he noted that he charged A. Clark, Charles White, and Warner F. Hitchcock the same amount for a similar outfit, for the Glens Falls Chapter.

In 1817, as in 1816, he painted a lottery sign for S. & M. Allen, at his customary price of $100. He also painted two signs for tobacco shops. One of these, entered in his Account Book on May 20, 1817, and entitled "Old Darby and Joan" he painted for Joseph Fry at a charge which is indecipherable. It may be recalled that he sold "pictures" with this title in 1804, 1806, and 1811, which were likely prints by another artist; so that, perhaps, the sign he painted for Joseph Fry was a copy of one of these prints. A wood engraving probably after the sign is used in an advertisement of Fry's tobacco shop in *The Albany Gazette* for June 3, 1819, January 13, 1820,[1] and numerous other issues of the paper. It is an especially good advertisement for a tobacco shop appealing as it does to women as well as men, because in the engraving Darby and Joan are shown holding hands and both happily smoking their pipes.

The other sign Ames painted for a tobacconist was entitled "Sign Pocahuntas," for which he charged George Pearson $40 on February 13, 1817. A wood engraving, doubtless after this sign, appears in *The Albany Gazette & Daily Advertiser* for November 11, 1818, above an advertisement with the caption:

[1] Reference for January 13, 1820, and photostat, supplied by Mrs. Katharine M. McClinton.

"At the Sign of Pocahontas," inserted by Walter Van Veghten and Mathias Kline who "occupy the store and factory of the late Mr. G. Pearson, State-street. . . ."

Besides these references to his ornamental painting, there are entries in the third Account Book, also dated 1817, which give a partial record of his artistic work for that year. In them the artist noted the indebtedness to him of six patrons for portraits: three, with frames, at $50 each; one, without a frame, at $30; and two at $75 each, with their frames.

One of those priced at $75 has been identified as a portrait of Gouverneur Morris, now on loan at Columbia University, which is an ambitious attempt to show a man seated at half-length and extending one hand toward the spectator. A duplicate of this portrait, which the artist did not record, is at The New-York Historical Society.[2] Ames painted two more portraits of Gouverneur Morris, both at present unlocated. One is listed in the inventory of the artist's effects, 1836,[3] and also in the handbill of the sale of his paintings, 1842.[4] The other he recorded in his Account Book in 1818 for Joseph Delaplaine.

Unrelated to the artist's work but fitting into his chronology at this time are two references to trips which he made and recorded in his Expense Book for 1817. He paid two visits to Schenectady, one in May and the other in July.

In 1818, Ames painted some portraits for the publisher Joseph Delaplaine of Philadelphia which were destined for a projected portrait gallery of "Distinguished Americans" advertised as a "Panzographia" to be opened on the first day of January, 1819. There were to be over two hundred portraits in the collection.[5]

Of the eighteen portraits which Ames listed in his Account Book during 1818, nine were painted for Joseph Delaplaine. Five of them—"Doct" Livingston (a copy), Gouverneur Morris, George Clinton, Solomon Van Rensselaer, and the Reverend

[2] A discussion of these portraits is given on pp. 25–29, *NYHS Quart.*, January 1951.

[3] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. 1.

[4] [Ames, Ezra], *Catalogue Sale of Portraits*, 1842.

[5] Delaplaine, 15, 16.

Hooper Cumming (crossed out and here assumed not to have been painted)—were to be paid for by Delaplaine himself at $15 a portrait. The remainder—portraits of the first Mrs. DeWitt Clinton (Marie Franklin), a copy, former Acting Governor John Tayler, Solomon Southwick, and Stephen Van Rensselaer—were to be paid for, respectively, by Governor Clinton, who ordered the copy of a portrait of his wife; and the others by the sitters themselves, at a cost of $30 a portrait.

Delaplaine's Gallery was bought in 1825 by Rubens Peale for Peale's Museum, New York, which failed in 1837. At the sale of this museum that year, P. T. Barnum bought most of the collection for his American Museum.[6] One of the portraits which Barnum presumably did not acquire was the striking bust portrait of George Clinton, now owned by Dr. George Clinton Andrews, which has a history of having been bought by a private individual at the Peale sale.[7] Another portrait, that of Solomon Van Rensselaer, is known to have been acquired by P. T. Barnum, and was destroyed by fire when Barnum's American Museum burned down[8] on July 13, 1865.[9]

In 1818, Ames painted a number of other pictures for DeWitt Clinton besides the portrait of Mrs. Clinton intended for Delaplaine's Gallery. Two of them were portraits of the Governor's sons George and Franklin. The other three were still-life paintings of fish, for the Governor was a naturalist of standing. But Ames, a portrait painter, did not list them as still-life paintings. One he recorded as a "Portrait of a White Lake Fish," another he listed as a "Portrait of a Lake Herring," and the third, of an unidentified sitter, he recorded simply as "Fish."

A year earlier, in 1817, Ames began to paint the official portrait of DeWitt Clinton as Governor of New York State for the Corporation of the City of Albany. Of other portraits of the statesman, a number were painted about this time; for DeWitt Clinton, having failed to be reappointed as Mayor of New York City in

[6] *MS Sellers, Charles Coleman*, letter dated May 31, 1949.

[7] Bowen, 439.

[8] Bonney, I: 400–401.

[9] *Harper's Weekly*, July 29, 1865, pp. 473–474.

1815, immediately began his campaign for the Governorship of the State, and it was thought necessary that his likeness be kept before the public for political purposes. Clinton recorded the names of a number of artists in his still unpublished diary during the years 1816 and 1817. It is interesting to mention their names here because it will give an idea of Ames's position in the chronology of American art history.

During the year 1816, DeWitt Clinton recorded calls, in New York City, on Cooper, Parisen, Jarvis, Trumbull, Vanderlyn, and Milbert, and twice mentioned specifically sitting to Jarvis. In 1817, he recorded frequent calls on and sittings to Vanderlyn, Jarvis, Dunlap, and Coffee the sculptor, also in New York City; and in several entries he wrote that he had sat to "Dunlap and Vanderlyn," probably meaning he sat to both at the same time.

Later in 1817, after he had taken up his duties as Governor at Albany, Clinton began sitting for his official portrait to Ames. On December 4, 1817, Clinton notes "E. Ames" in his diary. Then on December 8, 1817, he writes, specifically, that he "called at Ames for a sitting." In entries for December 24, 1817, and January 6, and 23, 1818, he again notes that he "sat for Ames." Four entries for January 5, 19, and 31, and February 28, read merely "Ames's or Mr. Ames."[10] The portrait must have been finished before March 8, 1818, which is the date on which Ames recorded it in his Account Book. The charge was $100 for the portrait, and $50 for the frame.

After the painting of this portrait, Clinton entered the name of the artist in his diary on March 25 and 31; June 5, 10, 25, and 27; September 4 and 5; October 12; and December 16, 1818; and February 2, 1819. Since merely the name is given in the entries, one can only guess at the nature of these visits. One visit was on March 25. This was the same day that Ames noted in his Account Book the Governor's indebtedness to him for "Painting a Portrait of a Lake Herring," which permits one to surmise that on this and perhaps on some of the other visits the artist called for his

[10] *MS Clinton, DeWitt.*

marine subjects, or painted them on the premises. Perhaps, again, he and the Governor discussed Masonic matters. On one of the visits, September 5, 1818, he was among an interesting group of callers at the Governor's mansion: the Secretary of State, Miss Spencer and her niece, and Citizen Genet and his wife with their son.

To this period belong some of the portraits by Ames which have been confused with the work of other artists. One, the portrait of Mrs. Hooper Cumming and her daughter, presented to The New-York Historical Society in 1896 as the work of Rembrandt Peale, was attributed to Ames by William Sawitzky in 1944. Another, the portrait of her husband owned by The New Jersey Historical Society, formerly attributed to John Vanderlyn, was recently attributed to Ames by the writers, judging from a photograph. The attribution was made because the portrait is a companion portrait to that of the sitter's wife (that is, the portraits are the same size and the sitters face each other); and because it has mannerisms found in the work of Ames such as the placing of the high lights in the eyes; and the bold painting of the background similar to that found in the portrait of Absalom Townsend. It is here assumed that this portrait of Hooper Cumming is not the portrait recorded by the artist in his Account Book as painted for the Joseph Delaplaine Gallery (crossed out, and thus possibly never painted), because it is a family picture and not a gallery piece.

A privately owned portrait of Mrs. Jacob Jennings Brown, painted about 1818, formerly attributed to Jarvis, was attributed to Ames in 1940 by William Sawitzky. Another and different portrait of Mrs. Brown, owned at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, was attributed to Ames in the same year by Miss Hope Mathewson.

Of the six portraits which the artist recorded in his third Account Book as of the year 1819, one has been identified as the bust portrait of Harmanus Bleecker which is now at the Harmanus Bleecker Library, Albany. A replica of the portrait is

privately owned. The one at the Harmanus Bleecker Library, rather dark perhaps because of the need for cleaning, is an especially fine characterization. Painted with extreme care, it is one of the best examples of the artist's work. Another recorded and located portrait by the artist during this year is the convincing likeness of General Solomon Van Rensselaer which remains today in the house in Albany for which it was intended. Two portraits, unrecorded in the Account Book but signed and dated 1819, are of the artist's father, Captain Jesse Emes, at the age of 80, and of the Captain's third wife, who was then 70, and whom he married in January of that year.[21]

The artist's recorded miscellaneous work for 1819 includes the "alegorical Painting for T[emple] Lodge," Albany, previously mentioned; a portrait frame for Ambrose Spencer; another for the Reverend John Chester; a fancy piece to be used as an embroidery design; and two signs. One of the signs, recorded July 16, 1819, is entitled "Eagle Sign." It is charged to H. Bamman who had advertised in *The Albany Gazette* for June 3, 1819, the opening of his Eagle Tavern, and it was for this caravansary that the sign was undoubtedly painted. It cost Mr. Bamman $13. The other sign was likewise for Mr. Bamman, and cost him $7.

Other references to the artist at this time are found in his Expense Book for 1819. During June, Ames visited New York City, a trip which cost him $30; his expenses for the calendar year of 1819 amounted to $900; and $52.29 was what he had to pay in taxes.

There are only a few entries listing unpaid-for ornamental and artistic work accomplished during the next year 1820. The artist constructed three frames, one of them charged to Ambrose Spencer "for his Lady's portrait"; painted two stands of colors for the Albany Regiment; and made a "lottery sign for Richmond" for which he charged S. & M. Allen $80. With the painting of this sign Ames brought to a close his record of sign painting —an activity he had first recorded in 1791, twenty-nine years

[21] Reynolds, Helen Wilkinson, 41.

earlier. His prices had ranged from as low as two shillings in 1791 to $100 each for lottery signs painted in 1816, 1817, and in 1818.

His artistic work for the year 1820 includes the painting of a "Pike fish" and two portraits of the second Mrs. DeWitt Clinton (Catherine Jones), one an original and the other a "copy," all for Governor Clinton. In this instance Ames used the word "copy" to mean a replica of his own portrait. Entries for portraits of the Reverend Doctor "Blackford" in 1818, and his wife in 1820, probably refer to those of Doctor Blatchford and his wife (reproduced in the Blatchford family genealogy), still unlocated.

One of the portraits of Mrs. Clinton, either the original or the replica, is at The Long Island Historical Society. The portrait is characteristic of a group of Ames's portraits of women which he painted early and late. In this group, some of the women wear turbans, some wear caps, some are bareheaded, and some wear frills of lace about the throat; but whatever the costume, they are all draped with similar flower-bordered shawls. In a portrait of Mrs. Thomas Jones (Margaret Livingston), which was possibly painted at the same time as that of her daughter, Mrs. DeWitt Clinton, the shawl is also introduced.

A picture belonging to the period about 1820–1825 is the handsome portrait of Ambrose Latting Jordan at the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N. Y. It was once attributed to Morse and, more recently, tentatively attributed to Jarvis. A portrait of Jordan is listed in the inventory of the artist's estate, 1836, and also in the handbill: *Catalogue Sale of Portraits* [in the artist's estate], 1842, which is documentary evidence for the attribution to Ames. Artistic reasons for the attribution are: the dark vertical strip at one side of the picture; the faint diagonal at one of the upper corners; and the placing of the high lights in the eyes on the inside of both pupils—three characteristics of many of Ames's portraits.

There is an interesting document of the year 1820 which shows how far the artist's reputation had by now penetrated into upstate New York. It is a letter, dated July 20, 1820, Ovid, New

York, in which William Thompson requests of Ezra Ames that he take as a pupil a young man of exceptional character named John Morehouse, who would "furnish himself with board by his industry."[12] To this young aspirant there is no further reference.

The next year there is another reference to an aspiring young man who visited Ames's gallery and later on made a name for himself as an artist. He was born in 1806 at Lennox, Madison County, New York; and when he was fifteen years old his father took him on a visit to Albany. There the boy "saw for the first time a gallery of portraits: they were the works of Mr. Ames."[13] The boy was Frederick R. Spencer who became a well-known painter of the next generation.[14]

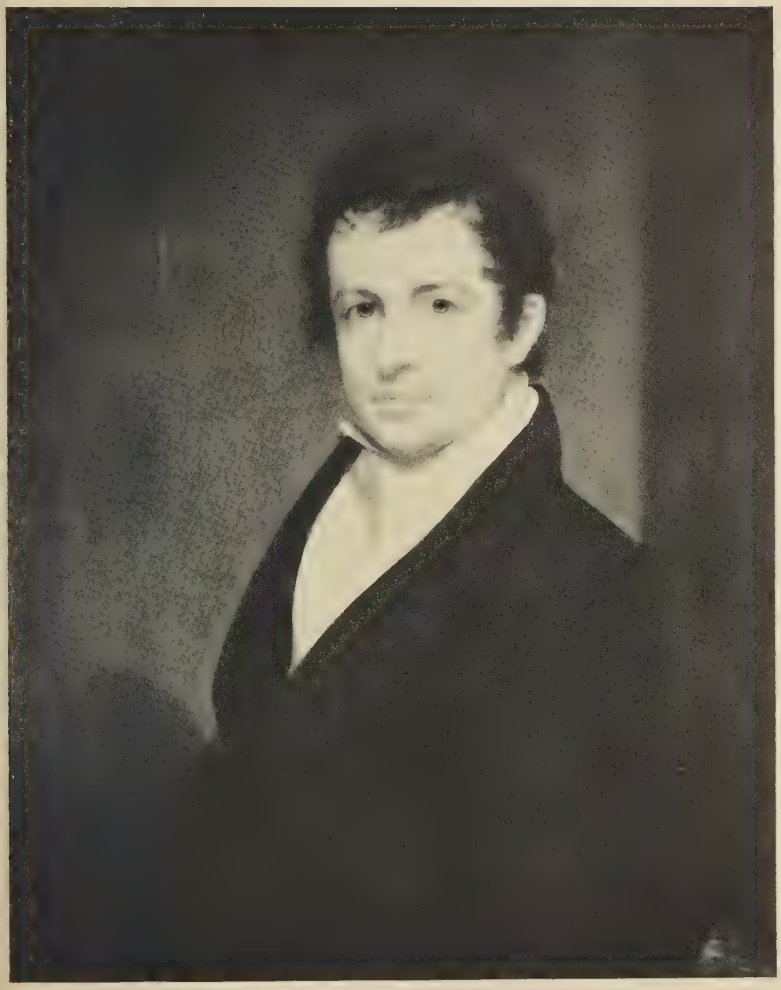
In his Expense Book for the same year, 1821, during May, the artist recorded a trip he took to New York. In his Account Book during the year he noted the painting of seven portraits, and also a still-life picture of an apple and a pear, the latter for DeWitt Clinton. The next year he continued to work for this patron and friend. On April 23, 1822, he recorded the painting of a "Silver Lake White Fish" for the Governor; and on June 11, 1822, he recorded that the Governor owed him $10 for cleaning and gilding a frame for a portrait of Judge Ambrose Spencer. Another small job of this year was the "altering a painting of Lake Georg[e]" at a charge of $2 for James Caldwell, a landscape of which mention has already been made. He also recorded payment due him on three portraits, which suggests not so much that he painted only a few portraits this year, but that other portraits of this year were so promptly paid for that they did not have to be recorded.

One learns from his Expense Books that during the next two years the artist took a number of outings. On June 22, 1822, he recorded that he spent $30 on a trip to New York. On August 1, 1822, he noted that $4.25 covered his "Expenses in vewing" the "Cannal" without, however, recording the point of vantage from

[12] *MS Ames and Others*, No. 1, July 20, 1820.

[13] Dunlap, II: 436.

[14] *Appletons' CAB*, V: 629.



AMBROSE LATTING JORDAN (1789–1865)

By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1820–1825

(Photo by Wurts Brothers)

Owned by Mr. Stephen C. Clark
On permanent loan to the New York State Historical Association

which he made this observation of what was doubtless the Erie Canal then under construction. The following year in June, 1823, he spent $60 on a visit to New York and Philadelphia; and in August of the same year he spent another $60 on a trip to Buffalo, and "Niageria."

Since Buffalo was the western terminus of the Erie Canal, one may assume that Ames spent some of his time in "vewing" the canal construction from there during this last trip. The eastern section of this great undertaking was completed on October 1, 1823. Referring to the Erie and Champlain Canals, Cadwallader D. Colden wrote: "... when the lock which forms the communication between the Canals, and the artificial basin in the Hudson River, at Albany, was opened on the eighth of October, eighteen hundred and twenty-three, there was a continuous Canal navigation from the Genesee River, and from White Hall, at the head of Lake Champlain, to Albany." He continues: "Such an auspicious event as the passage of the first boats from the west, and the north into the tide waters, was celebrated with some ceremony." In the celebration of this event held at Albany, on October 8, 1823, Ezra Ames took a prominent part.

Colden records that, on the appointed day, the canal boats arrived at Albany "with colours flying, bands of music, and crowded with people. . . ." He continues: "The first boat which entered the lock was the De Witt Clinton, having on board Governor Yates, the Mayor and Corporation of Albany, the Canal commissioners and engineers, the committees, and other citizens. Several other boats succeeded. One, (not the least interesting object in the scene), was filled with ladies. The cap-stone of the lock was laid with masonic ceremonies, by the fraternity who appeared in great numbers and in grand costume."[15]

The Masonic ceremonies were described by the editor of *The Albany Argus* in the issue for Friday, October 10, 1823:

> On Wednesday the 8th inst. the thunder of artillery and the pealing of bells announced the arrival of the day which will ever be held

[15] Colden, 59–61.

memorable by the inhabitants of this city, and form an important era in the annals of the state. . . . At this time, the ceremony of laying the top-stone of the lock, was performed by Ezra Ames, Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of the state of New-York, dressed in his official robes, and attended by his subordinates, arrayed in the insignia of their respective offices, in the following order:—

The procession opened to the right and left, and the grand officers passed through to the front, and once around the lock to the north side.

The companions formed on each side of the grand officers with the grand marshall on the left.

Prayer by the Rev. Grand Chaplain.

Exhortation by the Grand High Priest [Ezra Ames].

Celebration ode chanted while the procession moved three times around the lock under the arches.

The engraved plate was then examined and placed under the cape stone by the Grand Scribe.

The cape stone was laid by the Grand High Priest [Ezra Ames] assisted by the Grand Architects.

Corn, wine and oil were consecrated on the cape stone by the presiding officer [Ezra Ames].

Benediction by the presiding officer [Ezra Ames].

Closing ceremonies. The procession passed three times round the lock under the arches.

Final close by the discharge of nine cannon, by three times three—flourish of music between each three.

The editor then went on to say that the "Final Close" consisted in another ceremony "no less novel and interesting" than the others: "Dr. Mitchell" poured bottles of water from "two oceans"—one from the mid-ocean of the Atlantic, and the other from the Pacific—into the lock. This was Dr. Samuel L. Mitchill who, after the ceremony of mingling the waters: "pronounced an epithalamium upon the union of the River and the Lakes, after which the lock gates were opened, and the [canal boat] De Witt Clinton majestically sunk upon the bosom of the Hudson."[16]

Reverting to the Masonic ceremonies, Mr. E. T. Reid writes that: "Afterward DeWitt Clinton wrote to Grand Chapter commending the Grand High Priest [Ezra Ames] for his skill and dignity in conducting the work and he also stated that the cere-

[16] Colden, 61, 273.

monies made a most favorable impression on the assembled multitude."[17] This was the first of the Erie Canal Celebrations. At the second Canal Celebration, held in 1825 upon the completion of the Erie Canal for its entire length from Lake Erie to the Hudson River, Ezra Ames was again to take a prominent part in the ceremonies.

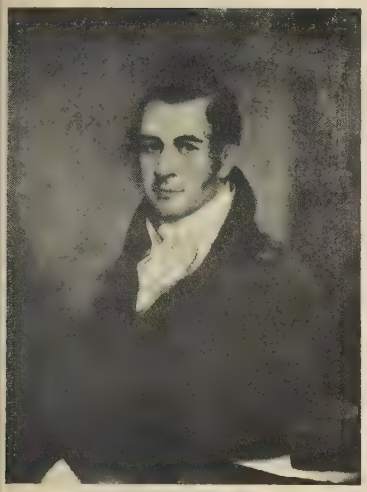
In October 1823, Ames recorded in his Expense Book that he paid a visit to Waterford. Earlier in the same year, he recorded in his Account Book, two small but unusual jobs: the painting, or repainting, of two tobacco-store Indians. The charges were against a Mr. Solomon, both for "painting an Indian statue." The first charge was for $6, the second for $5. They are the last records of miscellaneous and ornamental work found in the artist's Account Books. A wood engraving, presumably after one of the Indian statues, appears in an advertisement of "Caldwell & Solomons Tobacco and Snuff Store" published in *The Albany Gazette* for January 13, 1820.[18]

Turning from the artist's Masonic activities and his miscellaneous job-painting, to continue his chronology as an artist: a number of portraits may be assigned to the years 1820–1824. One of these is a bust portrait of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, in his later years; and another is a bust portrait of his son, Lieutenant Benjamin Tallmadge, Jr., a handsome portrait of a young man in naval uniform which afforded Ames the opportunity of introducing some pleasing color contrasts. Both are said to have been painted in 1820. Another portrait of about this year is that of Theodore Strong, carefully drawn and colorfully painted. Equally well-drawn but thinly painted is the excellent character study of Marcus Tullius Reynolds, painted *c.* 1821. Bust portraits of Dr. Stephen Reynolds and his wife were painted *c.* 1824.

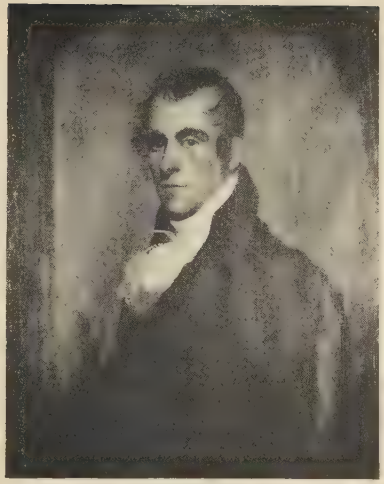
The portrait of William James (1771–1832) at Union College is definitely dated: the year 1822 appears clearly on a letter which he holds in his hand. It was formerly attributed to Stuart, and then

[17] Reid, 13.

[18] Photostat of advertisement supplied by Mrs. Katharine M. McClinton and reproduced with her article on "Ezra Ames, Ornamental Painter," in *The Magazine Antiques*, September 1951.



THEODORE STRONG (1790–1869)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1820
(Photo by FARL)
Owner: Mr. Theodore Strong, Jr.



MARCUS T. REYNOLDS (1788–1864)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1821
(Photo by FARL)
Owner: Mr. Kenneth G. Reynolds

to Waldo and Jewett. Finally it was attributed to Ames by the late William Sawitzky. A portrait of Mrs. James King (Ellen James), daughter of William James (1771–1832) by his second wife, Mary Ann Connolly; and a portrait of the third wife of William James, Catharine Barber, formerly attributed to Waldo, are contemporaneous. The portraits of father and daughter have backgrounds which are much alike, and the hands of all the sitters are painted in a similar manner. The two women hold handkerchiefs, and Mrs. James wears the characteristic flower-bordered shawl. The handwriting in the letter which William James holds in his hand, clearly addressed: "W[m] James, E[sq.,]/ Albany," resembles the handwriting of Ezra Ames in his Account Books. The three portraits are reproduced herein.

Soon after the painting of the James family portraits an important event took place in the Ames household: the marriage of the Reverend William James (1797–1868), a son of the artist's patron, William James (1771–1832) and his first wife, Elizabeth

MRS. WILLIAM JAMES (1782–1859)
By Ezra Ames, 1822 (FARL photo)
Owned by Mr. A. Coster Schermerhorn

WILLIAM JAMES (1771–1832)
By Ezra Ames, 1822 (FARL photo)
Owned by Union College

MRS. JAMES (ELLEN JAMES) KING
(1800–1823)
By Ezra Ames, 1822 (FARL photo)
Owned by Mrs. Reginald P. Rose

Tillman, to the artist's daughter Marcia. The reporter in *The Albany Argus*, Friday, November 26, 1824, announced it as follows: "Married—On Wednesday evening [November 24] last, by the Rev. Mr. Weed, Rev. William James to Marcia L. the daughter of Ezra Ames, Esq. all of this city." The witnesses were Dr. Chester and J. V. Henry. The ceremony took place in the First Presbyterian Church, Albany,[19] probably because four years earlier, in 1820, the groom had been ordained by the Presbytery at Albany.[20] The wedding was thus recorded in his Expense Book by the father of the bride: "Marcia 50.00" and "Weding Expenses 30.00."

Although the wedding took place in the Presbyterian Church, at this time Ezra Ames probably belonged to the Dutch Church. It is true that in 1794 he had contributed 12 shillings to the "Presperterian Church," but for the next twenty years there is no mention in either his Account Books or Expense Books of any other such contribution. Then, beginning in 1815 and continuing intermittently through his Expense Books, until the last one dated 1826, he made entries for pew rent in an unspecified church. The amount he mentions as paid yearly was usually "16/." The church was probably the one referred to in the executors' accounts of the artist's estate as the "2nd Dutch Church," in which, according to them $5.00 was the charge for pew No. 36 on the second floor;[21] or, as specified on page three of the certified inventory of his estate, "pew No. 36 in the N. E. Corner Gallery of S. Dutch Church."[22] The edifice referred to was no doubt the one then on Beaver Street known at various times as the Second, South, and Middle Dutch Church. It was replaced in 1881 by a building on the corner of Madison Avenue and Swan Street.[23]

Returning to the year 1824: in that year Ames was elected a member of the American Academy of the Fine Arts, the associa-

[19] *MS First Presbyterian Church*, typewritten Register.

[20] Hastings, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, April 1924, p. 108.

[21] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. V, Item 5.

[22] *Ibid.*, No. I, Item 1.

[23] Howell and Tenney, 771.

tion to whose exhibition, held in 1816, Benjamin Armitage had urged him to send his work. This second reference to the American Academy, found in the minutes of the association, is dated May 29, 1824:

> The following gentlemen were nominated and elected Academicians of this Institution. [*There then appear the names:*] Messrs William Jewett, E. Metcalf, N. Rogers, J. Milbert, A. B. Durand, W. W. Wall, John Frazee, C. Ingham, Henry Inman, Enrico Causicci, William Main and E. Ames of Albany—and the following gentlemen were proposed as Associates Messrs Bisbee, Paradise, De Rose, Wright, Marsiglia, and R. W. Weir—at the same time the following gentlemen were proposed as Honorary Members—Charles Leslie, [William] Strickland, S. F. B. Morse, Charles Fraser, G. Fairman, J. Wood, N. Joscelyn.[24]

In the catalogues of the exhibitions for 1825 and 1826, Ames is listed as an Honorary Member. Although his membership obviously gave Ames the privilege of sending his work to the American Academy exhibitions, an examination of the exhibition catalogues fails to show that Ames ever exhibited his work at any of their displays. Furthermore, an examination of the exhibition catalogues of the National Academy of Design, organized in 1825 as a rival association to the American Academy of the Fine Arts,[25] likewise fails to show that Ames was ever an exhibitor with this group of which he was not a member.

An invitation from the American Academy sent to Ames announcing an exhibition is at The New-York Historical Society. It is a printed form from the secretary with "E. Ames Esq" handwritten at the top of the sheet, and dated December 12, 1831, inviting him "to exhibit some specimens" of his art " at the annual Exhibition" of that association.

About 1825, Ames painted a miniature of Jesse Hawley, now at The New-York Historical Society. It was Jesse Hawley who on the morning of October 26, 1825, addressed the crowds assembled at Buffalo during the gala day set aside for the celebration of the opening of the "Great Erie Canal." These festivities cen-

[24] *MS American Academy of the Fine Arts, Minutes*, III: 144–145.

[25] Cowdrey, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record.*

tered around a flotilla of five boats destined to depart that day on an epoch-making first voyage on the entire length of the canal from Lake Erie to the Hudson River; and thence to the sea. The passengers in the first boat, the *Seneca Chief*, were Governor DeWitt Clinton, the Lieutenant Governor, and numerous delegates from cities along the waterway. When the festivities were over at Buffalo, the *Seneca Chief* "led off in fine style, drawn by four grey horses, fancifully caparisoned," and all the boats in the flotilla followed after.[26]

JESSE HAWLEY (1773–1842)
Miniature on ivory
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1825
The New-York Historical Society
Gift of Jesse Hawley

In the meanwhile a celebration was being prepared for the reception of the passengers when the boats reached Albany. Governor Clinton "who so ably served the Craft as its Grand Master," had "asked the Masons of the State to take part in the imposing ceremony when the waters of Lake Erie first mingled with the ocean." Ezra Ames was selected to act as master of ceremonies[27] at this second Canal celebration, as he had been asked to act at the first held in 1823.

Levi Beardsley, a recently elected member of the State Assembly[28] who came to Albany for the celebration, recalls in his Reminiscences that on the evening of November 1, 1825, the city was crowded with "citizens from every part of the state."[29] The celebration which attracted this multitude to Albany was to begin on the morning of the following day.

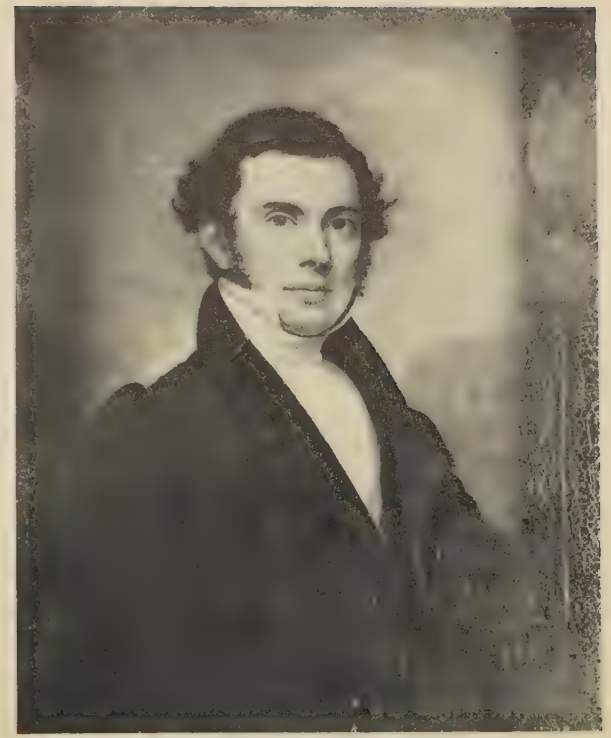
[26] *The Albany Argus & City Gazette*, November 4, 1825, (article dated November 1, 1825, quoted from *The Buffalo Journal* of October 25, 1825).

[27] Bresee, *Masonic Family Magazine*, July–August 1950, p. 11. Reference supplied by Mr. Charles T. Miller.

[28] *Appletons' CAB*, 207.

[29] Beardsley, 213, 216.

MRS. JOHN KEYES PAIGE (1797–1829)
By Ezra Ames, dated by Account Book, 1826
(Photo by FARL)



SAMUEL STEVENSON FOWLER (1799–1850)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1827
(Photo by FARL)

HONORS IN LAST DECADE, 1825–1836:

AMES AT THE ERIE CANAL CELEBRATION, LATER WORK AS AN ARTIST, BANK PRESIDENT

ALTHOUGH the sky over Albany was ominously dark on the early morning of November 2, 1825, a cold northwest wind soon blew the clouds away; and the day was memorably fair when, at half past ten o'clock, the flotilla reached the last lock where the boats were to be lowered and passed through to the Hudson River.[1] On the shore, by a monument in which the records of the event were to be sealed, stood a group of Freemasons with Ezra Ames at their head as master of ceremonies. Standing in the bow of the *Seneca Chief* were Governor DeWitt Clinton, who was to conduct the formal opening of the canal, General Stephen Van Rensselaer, and other Canal Commissioners. Levi Beardsley recalls:

> Several boats were in the procession, all of them loaded with passengers containing as many as could be safely on them. As they approached the lock, a deposit was made in the monument, of papers, manuscripts, and other articles, giving a history of the work. The acting grand master [Ezra Ames] then proceeded in the presence of the fraternity and thousands of spectators, to adjust and place the "cap stone," in masonic forms. He finally gave three emblematic knocks, declaring it finished. The brethren passed round, as if to inspect and verify the truth of the annunciation, performing their part of the ceremony; the cannon announced the completion; and the boats glided through the lock into the Hudson.[2]

A reporter for *The Albany Argus* noted that the announcement of the completion was a grand salute from twenty-four cannon mounted on the pier.[3]

The festivities continued throughout the day, and ended in an entertainment at the Albany Theatre. The theatre managers issued an advertisement, dated November 2, 1825, announcing the

[1] Colden, 308–309.
[2] Beardsley, 213–214.
[3] *The Albany Argus & City Gazette*, Tuesday, November 8, 1825, XIII, No. 1335 (article dated Friday, November 4, 1825).

attractions for the evening: a play, a farce, and the reciting of an "Ode" composed especially for the Erie Canal Celebration. In their advertisement there is a reference to the work of Ames:

> The evening's Entertainment to conclude with a splendid transparency, in honor of the CANAL CELEBRATION, representing the Genius of America supporting the portraits of Mr. Clinton and Mr. Fulton, painted by Mr. Sera; the portrait of Mr. Clinton from a painting of Mr. Ames. In the background a view of the Hudson, with the steam boat Fulton in perspective. A view of the CANAL with boats passing and repassing.[4]

The completion of the inland waterway was eventful because New York rather than New Orleans would thereafter become the chief port of trade with the Northwest Territory.[5] From then on the larger part of the commerce of the Mississippi Valley moved through the Valley of the Mohawk, then down the Hudson River. Thus began the great economic development of New York State.[6]

Among the portraits that Ames painted many are of the men who were prominent during this expansion. For this reason, aside from their artistic merits, they are important historical documents of that era. As for their artistic merits: the best of Ames's later work shows an increasing skill in characterization and technique. However, as Mr. Robert G. Wheeler has pointed out: "Often we find a late painting which seems quite similar to an early one in technical ability and approach."[7]

In his third Account Book, during 1823, the artist listed no portraits for which payments were due him. In 1824 he listed six. Among the nine portraits listed during 1825, he did not list the excellent portrait of Clarkson Crolius, at The New-York Historical Society, which is signed and dated on the back as of this year. Also unrecorded in the Account Book are the portraits of William Tully, Jr., 1826, and Julius Rubens Ames, about 1826. The portrait of Tully is characteristic of Ames's work except

[4] Munsell, *Collections*, II (1867): 472.
[5] DAB, IV: 224.
[6] Bresee, *Masonic Family Magazine*, July–August, 1850, p. 15.
[7] Wheeler, *American Collector*, August 1947, p. 8.

WILLIAM TULLY, JR. (1785–1859)

By Ezra Ames, 1826

Courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery

for the boldly painted buff-colored overcoat and mantle. In contrast, the portrait of the artist's son is meticulously painted throughout. The portrait of Tully is an exceptionally convincing characterization.

Several references in the artist's Expense Book for the same year, 1826, relate to his travels. In June he visited Staatsburg, obviously to see his father, spending $4; in July he visited New York, his expenses coming to $25; and the same month, perhaps on his return trip from New York to Albany, he revisited Staatsburg, his expenses this time coming to $8, which indicates a longer stay than his visit in June.

Thirteen letters at The New-York Historical Society, to and from Ames, relate to his official duties as a Mason. They cover the period from 1810 to 1826.[8] During the latter year Ames retired from his position as Grand High Priest. Of his retirement, Mr. E. T. Reid writes:

> After twenty-four years' service as Grand High Priest Ezra Ames was again tendered the nomination, but he believed he had been in office long enough and should now retire, and accordingly he declined the nomination. On February 10, 1826, a resolution was adopted as follows:
>
> "Resolved, That the thanks of this Grand Chapter be presented to M. E. Ezra Ames, Past Grand High Priest, for his long, able and satisfactory discharge of the duties of his office, and the officers were authorized to prepare a suitable testimonial to be presented to him at the next annual meeting of the Grand Chapter, the expense not to exceed $250.00."
>
> This was done on February 10, 1827, by M. E. Asa Fitch and M. E. Companion Ezra Ames made a suitable speech of acceptance.

In 1828 Ames again attended the Grand Chapter, and for the last time in 1829. Mr. Reid concludes: "Thus we come to the end of the active career of one of the most remarkable companions who ever wore the Mitre and the Breastplate."[9]

A reference to another of the artist's group participations is vague as to time, but it is placed here because it reveals him in a position of leadership in artistic as well as Masonic circles. Jonathan Tenney wrote in 1883:

[8] *MS Ames and Others*, No. 1. [9] Reid, 13.

At one time Albany had a "Gallery of Fine Arts," where were collected quite a display of good pictures by such artists as Durand, Sully, Peale, Chapman, Carleton, Weir, the Harts, Ames and others. But most of the artists sought more favored homes and the treasures of the gallery were scattered. Ames, who was the founder and leading spirit, had died.[10]

One of the rare references to the artist's home life is found in a letter of the year 1827, from Caroline Spencer, presumably the daughter of Polly (Emes) Spencer who was the half-sister of Ezra Ames,[11] addressed to "Mon Cher Julius," her cousin and a son of Ezra Ames. Writing from Jersey City, July 23, 1827, Caroline begins by telling of the bizarre exploits of Julius' brother Angelo who had gone to sea in a pilot boat with the idea that seasickness would cure him of what Caroline hoped was an imaginary ailment. She also reports that "Uncle Harry," alluding to Henry Emes, a half-brother of Ezra Ames,[11] and "Aunt Rachel talked of visiting Delhi this summer." Then she writes: "I learn by your letter that Uncle [Ezra] Ames has returned from Rochester since you give us news from Marcia, I am happy to hear that she is again settled in good health." Of Captain Jesse Emes, Ezra's father, and of his third wife, Caroline writes: "Old Grandpa and Grandma are very much the same. Grandpa fails from year to year but gradually. . . ."[12]

Not quite two years after this intimation of his declining health, Captain Jesse Emes died on May 7, 1829, at the age of ninety.[13] In 1949 two visitors to Stattsburg,[14] searching for gravestones of members of the Emes family, found the family burying ground. It was hidden in a clump of trees on a hill west of the New York Central tracks near the railroad station. There is now no right of way to the plot, and its existence is not generally known to the local residents. The gravestones are overgrown with grass and poison ivy. The trunk of a large oak, which has grown up on the plot since the tablets were placed, has tilted the

[10] Tenney, 62.
[11] Sutliff, 31, 32.
[12] *MS Spencer, Caroline.*
[13] Gravestone.
[14] Irwin F. Cortelyou, and her husband, Mr. George B. Cortelyou, Jr.

gravestone of Captain Jesse Emes to a sharp angle. Other gravestones in the plot which the visitors recorded are those of Dorothy Emes (Captain Jesse's second wife); and those of his sons Jesse, Jr., and Henry.[15]

In a transcript of the Captain's will, dated March 24, 1813, among the records at the Surrogate's Court, Poughkeepsie, there is a note stating that the original will was delivered to the Captain's son Henry who was appointed the executor of the estate. Captain Jesse left forty pounds each to his daughters Sally Mulford, Polly Spencer, and Betty Silknegg [*sic*], a codicil dated Staatsburg, August 29, 1825, being inserted after Betty's death; and fifty pounds each to his sons Timothy Emes and Ezra "Emes." To the children of Jesse Emes, Jr., he left one shilling, "they having received their part."[16]

Reverting to an earlier year, and specifically to the artist's record of portraits unpaid for at the time of completion: a number of the twelve portraits which he listed in his Account Book during 1826 have been located. One is a copy he made of his bust portrait of Colonel Tallmadge. Three others are of Aaron Thorp, his wife, and their daughter. In the first two of these, the artist took his usual care in the painting of the likenesses. On the other hand, in his portrait of the Thorps' daughter, the artist reverts to his earlier methods, which he invariably used in his portraits of children. It has little of the skilled artistry of the portraits of Aaron Thorp and his wife, and is simply a delightful primitive painting. Bust portraits of John Keyes Paige (formerly attributed to Francis Alexander) and of his first wife, Helen Maria Yates, noted in the Account Book this year, have also been located. Both are excellent characterizations, painted with great assurance.

The portrait of Samuel Stevenson Fowler, unrecorded in the

[15] The foregoing tombstones were also recorded in 1913 by George S. Van Vliet, who in addition recorded those of Betsey Selkreg [sic] (Jesse's daughter by his second wife); her husband, John Selkreg; John W., and Mary L. Selkreg, infants; Angelo Hughes, Jr., infant; Eliza Abby Hughes Cox; and John Wooldridge. Poucher and Reynolds, 124. The name Selkreg is spelled "Silkregg" by Sutliff, 32; and "Silknegg" in the will of Jesse Emes.

[16] *MS Emes, Jesse, Will.*

Account Books, but painted about 1827, judging from the apparent age of the sitter, is one of Ames's most attractive works. The figure is well drawn, well placed, and tastefully related to a background of pleasing color.

The record of the artist's portraits as found in his third Account Book during the four years from 1827 through 1830 may be summarized in a paragraph. He recorded three portraits in 1827; one in 1828; nine in 1829; and eight in 1830. Of several which have been located, one, a portrait of Eliphalet Nott painted for three students of Union College, is owned by that institution. Another is a portrait of Gerrit Yates Lansing, recorded in 1830, which is privately owned.

In a letter of the following year, one finds another of the few references which have been discovered, relating to the artist's family life. The letter is from the artist's daughter, Marcia Lucretia Ames, who was then Mrs. William James, to her brother Angelo, who, by this time, was a voyager in search of his health. The letter, dated Albany, January 6, 1831, is addressed to Angelo; and the forwarding addresses, including Mobile and Charleston (both crossed out), and New Orleans, indicate three of the young man's ports-of-call. Marcia begins:

> We had the pleasure of receiving your favour of the 24 yesterday. I read it over and over to all the family they listened to every word with the deepest interest. Ma [Mrs. Ezra Ames] said she was glad to hear her Son Angelo was alive yet. Pa [Ezra Ames] says the poor boy must have had a hard time of it—even Poll turned her head and looked as if she felt sorry—but she is in fine spirits this morning just now she is sitting on her pole laughing very heartily.

Although the precise nature of Angelo's hardships are only hinted at, they must have been hard indeed, for in the course of the long and pious passage which follows, the clergyman's wife hopes that her "Dear brother" feels "Grattitude to your Creator for preserving your life, when no human aid could be obtained." She then writes:

> Our family affairs go on much as usual. I have occupied the parlour all winter. Anna goes to school at [the] young Ladies Seminary. Emeline

is housekeeper and Ma is the lady New Years day we had a number of calls Dr Meigs Mr Fowler Mr Allcott Mr Marvin Mr King and Mr James seigniour—there were several more of your friends whose names I do not remember—Mr Dunn sends his best respects to you he wishes you to write him immediately, business has been very dull, we have not had any sleighing and very little cold weather, the franklin [stove] has kept the parlour pleasant and comfortable—

Further on she writes: "Julius continues in his own room painting Miniatures." She continues: "the cats and Parrot are in perfect health. The family all send their love—Ma sends her love in particular she says you must bring her a present and come home in the spring in good health. . . ." She concludes: "from your affectionate Sister Marcia L. James." Then, in a postscript, there is the only reference found thus far to the artist's feelings for any of the members of his family. "Write to Pa immediately," she implores, "You cannot show us a greater favour."[17]

The next month, on February 1, 1831, there is a final reference to the artist as a Freemason. In the report of the trustees of the Grand Chapter for that date, there is a record of the sale of stock of the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank of Albany which Ames had bought for the Chapter in 1820 for $1,590.00. The stock was sold in 1831 at an advance of fifty percent.[18]

This purchase, made six years after he had been elected one of the board of directors of the Merchants and Farmers' Bank, is an indication of that business acumen which gained Ames the respect of his associates in the banking business. Three years after the sale of the stock which he had purchased for the Grand Chapter, Ames attained the highest possible position of confidence in the bank: he was elected president of the bank at the annual meeting of the board held on June 3, 1834.[19] Benjamin Knower had resigned as president on February 3, 1834; and Charles Dudley, a former mayor of the city, was acting as president when the meeting took place.[20] Of the twelve directors, ten were pres-

[17] *MS James, Mrs. William.*

[18] Reid, 13.

[19] *MS Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, Minutes,* consulted by Mr. George B. Cortelyou, Jr.

[20] Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, *Span of a Century.*

nt; and, according to the minutes of the meetings: "there was ne blank ballot and nine votes for Ezra Ames."[21]

There is an interesting reference to the qualifications for this ffice as bank president found in the centennial booklet *Span of Century* issued by the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank: "That ear [1834] Mr. Ames, who had risen from an artisan to an artist, and his brother officers, secured an amendment to the charter vhich removed the Mechanics and Farmers restrictive clause requiring that the president must be chosen from one of these lasses, and allowed the choice of any one irrespective of his rofession or employment."[22] As the president of the bank he ttended all the board meetings except the one on January 20, 835; and the few held early in the next year, before his death in ebruary.[23]

In 1834 Ames also received recognition of a different kind: paragraph about him appeared in the *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, by William Dunlap, the well-known work which was published in two volumes and which bears the same relation to the history of American artists as does the biographical work of Giorgio Vasari to hat of the Italian painters and sculptors. In his history Dunlap noted that:

> Mr. Ames was a coach painter in Albany; but attempting portraiture, so far succeeded, that, in 1812, his portrait of Governor George Clinton was exhibited, much to the painter's credit, in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. He, for many years, painted portraits of most of the western members of the legislature, and of many others: and I have reason to believe, that in old age he enjoys the blessings of competency, derived from his enterprise and industry. He has a son who paints miniatures.[24]

Julius was the son, doubtless trained by his father, who painted miniatures; and his name appears, with that of his father and brother, in the Albany Directories for the period 1832–1836:

[21] *MS Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, Minutes.*

[22] Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, *Span of a Century.*

[23] *MS Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, Minutes*, consulted by Mr. George B. Cortelyou, Jr.

[24] Dunlap, II: 258.

Ames, Angelo, 41 s. Pearl
Ames, Ezra, portrait painter, 41 s. Pearl
Ames, Julius R. miniature painter, 41 s. Pearl

Besides following his father's profession, Julius also became an active member of his father's Masonic lodge. Both brothers, indeed, were members of Temple Lodge, but Julius was the more active, for he was elected Master of the lodge in 1831 and 1834.[25]

There is little known about Ezra Ames at this time. In his Account Book under the date of September 3, 1831, he noted that Henry Shaw owed him for "Painting his daughters Portrait," which is the only portrait which he recorded for that year. There is then an hiatus in his Account Book until December 28, 1834, when he noted that Mrs. Cooper was his debtor "To Painting a Portrait of Doct^r Cooper her Deceased Husband." This portrait has recently been identified as of Dr. Charles DeKay Cooper. A photograph of an unlocated portrait of Mrs. Cooper (Margaret Tayler), daughter of John Tayler, was found in the same collection.

This entry for December 28, 1834 is the last in the Account Books. The artist had now but a little over a year to live. He did not attend several meetings of the Board of Directors of the Mechanics and Farmers' Bank during January–February, 1836.[26]

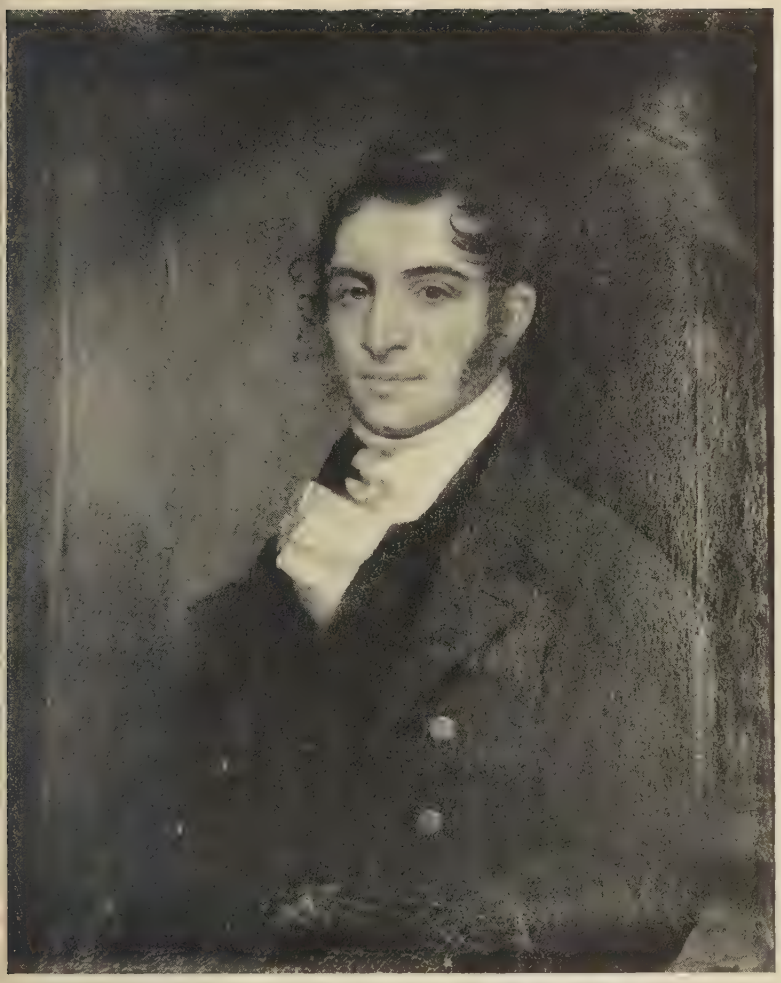
He died in office as president of the bank on February 23, 1836. Thus ended the successful career as an artist and banker of the boy who forty-three years earlier had settled in Albany and sold his small belongings to make ends meet. On the day of his death, a notice appeared in the *Albany Evening Journal:*

> Died. This morning at 3 o'clock Ezra Ames in the 68th year of his age. The relatives, friends & acquaintances of the deceased are invited to attend his funeral to-morrow at 3 o'clock from his residence 41 So. Pearl Street.

A similar notice appeared in *The Daily Albany Argus* on the following day.

That Dr. A[lden] March was the physician in attendance one

[25] Reid, 13.
[26] *MS Mechanics and Farmers' Bank, Minutes,* consulted by Mr. George B. Cortelyou, Jr.



JULIUS RUBENS AMES (1801–1850), ELDER SON OF THE ARTIST

By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1826

Owned by Miss Edith S. Wade

learns from his receipted bill;[27] from another receipted bill, it is evident that Richard Merrifield arranged the funeral ceremonies.[28] It was an old custom in Albany that: "None attend" a funeral "without a previous invitation,"[29] which may explain why Richard Merrifield charged for "Inviting & Attending Funeral." The funeral took place on February 24, 1836. Snow must have been on the ground because Richard Merrifield arranged for twenty sleighs to form the funeral procession.

Zipporah Ames did not long survive her husband. She died that spring, April 8, 1836.[30] Again Richard Merrifield arranged for the funeral ceremonies. In his itemized bill he charged for ten carriages which formed the funeral procession.[31]

The remains of Ezra Ames, his wife and their sons Julius and Angelo, now rest at the Albany Rural Cemetery in a large, well-kept oval plot surrounded by a driveway. This cemetery, however, was not consecrated until 1844,[32] and could not have been the original place of burial of the artist and his wife. At what time and from what cemetery their remains were removed to this plot is not noted in the cemetery records, the earliest of which are dated 1869. In that year only Angelo was still living, Julius having died in 1850. The cemetery records list the plot as the Angelo Ames lot indicating that Angelo was the purchaser.

The original place of burial of Ezra Ames and his wife, and also their son Julius, must have been the cemetery once on State and Knox Streets, established in 1806 on ground now a part of Washington Park,[33] because, according to a map of this cemetery at the Albany Institute, it was divided into sections for the various denominations including the Dutch Reformed Church of which the Ames family were presumably members. In 1868, this burial ground was closed and the bodies removed to St. Agnes Cemetery and to the Rural Cemetery.[34] The year 1868, then, was doubtless the time, and the old cemetery on State and Knox

[27] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. V, Item 4.
[28] *Ibid.*, No. II, Item 1.
[29] Munsell, I (1850): 315.
[30] *MS Ames Family*.
[31] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. II, Item 2.
[32] Phelps, 42.
[33] *Ibid.*, 33.
[34] *Ibid.*, 79.

Streets was the place from which the remains of Ezra Ames, his wife, and their elder son were removed to the present plot in the Albany Rural Cemetery.

A handsome family monument in the center of the Ames plot is incised on three faces: on the front face appear the names of Ezra Ames and his wife; on the right face, the name of Julius; and on the left face, that of Angelo. Four small stones to the east of the monument are incised with the same names. The stone dedicated to Ezra Ames bears, besides his name, the emblem of the Freemasons.

There is another stone in the plot, placed horizontally, which is also dedicated to Ezra Ames and his wife. It was probably removed from the old cemetery with their remains in 1868. At the top is carved the emblem of the Freemasons; at the bottom, this inscription: "In their death they were not divided."

In the records of the Albany County Surrogate's Court, Albany, there is a typewritten copy of the artist's will and numerous other papers relating to his estate.[35] Among these is an inventory assembled by appraisers who valued the artist's personal estate at $65,953.61.[36] Another version of the inventory, at the Albany Institute, gives the valuation as $65,835.36.[37] Other papers relating to the estate are at The New York State Library, Albany.[38]

The artist left about a third of his estate to each of his three children. Two maps of his real estate[39] show the practically even division of his property into three parts, one for each of his heirs.

Julius Ames and Angelo Ames, the executors of the estate, kept their accounts in a book now at The New York State Library.[40] Other documents relating to their joint transactions are among the papers in the Surrogate's Court.[41] One, dated May 2, 1838, is a power of attorney given by Angelo Ames to Julius Ames to act as sole executor of the estate.[42] The reason Angelo

[35] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. V, Item 2.

[36] *Ibid* No. I, Item 2; and No. V, Item 1.

[37] *Ibid*., No. I, Item 1.

[38] *Ibid*., No. II; and No. III.

[39] *Ibid*., No. I, and No. V, Item 1.

[40] *Ibid*., No. IV.

[41] *Ibid*., No. V.

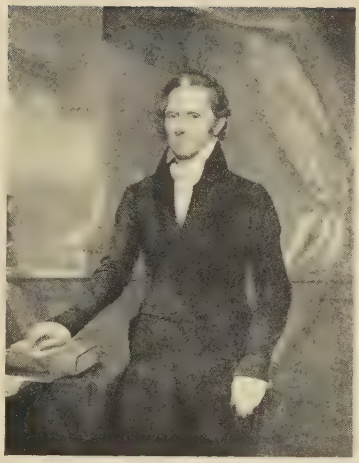
[42] *Ibid*., No. V, Item 6.

gave up his duties as an executor was that he was about to leave Albany and resume his quest for a climate suitable for his health, a quest which was to last a number of years.

If Angelo did not leave immediately, he left shortly thereafter because he is mentioned in a letter as rambling about Europe in search of his health by a visitor who saw Julius over five months later. In a letter filed with the Duyckinck Papers at The New York Public Library, James William Beekman writes to his friend Evert A. Duyckinck as follows:

Albany October 20th 1838 Saturday night. My dear Evert I am just returned from the Studio of an Albany artist—Mr Ames—quite a curious genius—to whom I was introduced by a friend—we found our man up two pair of stairs in a back room to which we made our way through picture frames and old lumber—A large rocking chair was hauled down from a semicircular screen of black—wherein *Sitters* went to recline—for me, and my friend accommodated with the only other chair in the room while the artist squatted down on the corner of a chest, and ever and anon picking up into momentary life a dim lamp by way of keeping time, entertained us right well—presently conversation turned on an absent brother of his—who had been in Madeira for his health—Our host spoke of some of the *fruits* of that famous island—that his brother had sent him—some wine actually put up there by him and therefore undoubtedly the real juice—to offer us some was of course the next thing—and ushering us into a large room hung round with many portraits of great men and women, celebrated & ignoble—but all original and acknowledged likenesses, he left us to our meditations for a time—Directly he returned, and led us into a Cabinet about ten feet square shelved to the ceiling, and dusky with books on two sides, while several choice pictures from Italy hung on the other walls. Beneath a fine Sketch of Old Charon ferrying over the Styx one of the loveliest of souls, was a little stand & thereon, true classic supper, wine nuts & apples—here were *chairs* for all—and our rusty looking open collared friend seemed just in the right place—he is an artist and a bookworm of snug fortune, but retiring habits—very much like Hawthorne, lives with an old aunt here, and reigns supreme in the upper stories of her house among easels, pallettes and canvases—His brother has a fantastic name rather Pealeian—namely "*Carlo Angelo*"—but is nevertheless described to be a very clever fellow—He is rambling about Europe, a confirmed Dyspeptic in search of comfort—chasing the climate that he fancies wherever he fancies it to be—he will be at Paris this winter and talks of Constantinople, or his brother here does for him—To this genius I am promised a letter and it may be worth taking—at all events I have had a rare evening.

MARTIN VAN BUREN (1782–1862)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1828–



ENOS T. THROOP (1784–1874)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1829–

Two of the "Portraits of Seven Governors of New York" by Ezra Ames
Owned by the City of Albany, at the Albany Institute of History and Art

The studio in which this "rare evening" took place was, obviously, the former studio of Ezra Ames at 41 South Pearl Street; and the host, Julius Rubens Ames. The pictures on the walls, and the books on the shelves reaching up to the ceiling were among those listed in the inventory made of the artist's estate in 1836.

Among the books were the Encyclopaedia Britannica; Delaplaine's Repository; Lavater's Physiognomy; The National Portrait Gallery; Ferguson's Astronomy; and some volumes on medicine and Freemasonry. Besides these reference books, there were: Fielding's Works; Homer's Iliad and Odyssey; Cervantes' Don Quixote; Milton's Paradise Lost; The Arabian Nights; The Spectator Papers; and the British Classics. The assessed value of the library, including a collection of drawings and engravings, was $264.77.[43]

A number of the pictures are listed in a handbill, dated July 26, 1842, advertising a "Sale of Portraits" in the estate of Ezra

[43] *MS Ames, Ezra, Estate*, No. I.

CATALOGUE SALE OF PORTRAITS.

By order of the Executors, to close an estate, will be offered for sale at No. 41 South Pearl-street, 2d story, until the 1st of October. The collection of

PORTRAITS IN OIL

by the late EZRA AMES, comprising about 50 likenesses of some of the most eminent Statesmen, Clergymen, &c., of this country. Also, several Portraits of Ladies, Fancy Pictures, &c. These paintings are principally originals, with a few copies from Stuart. Many of them are suitable for the rooms of public institutions. Such an opportunity to obtain authentic likenesses of our most celebrated public characters, has rarely, if ever been presented.

PRESIDENTS.

1. George Washington, copy from G. Stuart.
2. Head of John Adams, " " "
3. " Thomas Jefferson, " "
4. " James Madison, " "
5. " Martin Van Buren.

GOVERNORS.

6. George Clinton.
7. De Witt Clinton.
8. Joseph C. Yates.
9. Enos T. Throop.

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10. Hon. Stephen Van Rensselaer, Lt. Gov.
11. " do. do. do. in early life.
12. " John Taylor, Lt. Gov.
13. " Theodore Sedgwick, from Stuart.
14. General Peter Gansevoort, from do.
15. " Alexander Hamilton.
16. " Jacob Brown.
17. Col. ——— Lamb.
18. " ——— Williams.
19. Chancellor James Kent, 2 feet 6, by 3 feet.
20. Judge Smith Thompson, in early life.
21. " Wm. W. Van Ness, 2 ft 4 by 3 ft
22. Hon. Governeur Morris. " " "
23. " Samuel L. Mitchell, L. L. D. F. R. S.
24. " John W. Yates.
25. " James Strong, Esq.
26. " John I. De Graff.
27. " Ambrose L. Jordan.
28. George W. Clinton, Esq.
29. Thomas P. Jones, Esq.
30. William L. Stone, Esq.
31. Thomas H. Wentworth, Esq.
32. Timothy Dewey, Esq.
33. S. J. Penniman, Esq.
34. ——— Watkins, Esq.
William Robertson.

CLERGYMEN.

35. Rev. Dr. Timothy Dwight, 3 feet 5, by 4 feet 5.
36. " " Timothy Dwight, 2 feet 8, by 3 feet.
37. " " John H. Livingston.
38. " " Eliphalet Nott.
39. " " do. do. (duplicate.)
40. " " do. do. in early life.
41. " " Edward D. Griffin.
42. " " Andrew Yates.
43. " " B. T. Welch, 2 feet 8 by 3 feet.
44. " " Isaac Ferris.
45. " " ——— Forman.

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46. Group. Likeness of a mother and child.
47. Portrait of a lady.
48. " "
49. " "
50. " "
51. " "
52. " "
53. " "
54. " "
55. " "
56. " "
58. Elkanah Watson, Esq. copy from Copely, 4 feet by 5.
59. Chan. Robert R. Livingston, from Stuart.
60. James Rivington, painted by G. Stuart, 2 feet 4 by 3 feet.
61. Gideon Fairman, head by J. W. Jarvis.

HISTORICAL PICTURES.

62. Murder of the Princes in the Tower, 4 feet 9 by 7 feet 3.
63. Shipwreck scene from the Tempest, 4 feet by 5.
64. The Last Supper, (original,) 3 feet 5 by 4 feet 5.
65. Sampson and the Philistines, 3 feet by 4 feet 5.
66, 67, Groups of Heads.
68. Venus and Cupid, 2 feet 4 by 3 feet.
69, 70. Two Landscapes by A. R. Gutowski.
Also a few fancy pictures, busts, &c.

Pictures ready for examination. Those not previously disposed of, will probably be offered at public sale on the 1st of October. The size of portraits are 2 feet, by 2 feet 6 inches, except when specified.

Albany, July 26, 1842.

RARE BROADSIDE, ALBANY, JULY 26, 1842

As reproduced in *NYHS Quarterly Bulletin*, July 1931, p. 67

Ames. According to this handbill, reproduced on the page opposite, the pictures were then "ready for examination. Those not previously disposed of, will probably be offered at public sale on the 1st of October."[44]

Little remains to be told of the immediate family and home of Ezra Ames. According to the Albany Directories, Angelo and Julius continued to live at the home on 41 South Pearl Street until 1846/47, when they moved to 3 Plain Street, just around the corner, and on part of the property in Ezra Ames's estate. Here they lived for the rest of their lives.

Julius Rubens Ames died on June 5, 1850, and Angelo died on May 26, 1886, according to the inscriptions on their gravestones in the Albany Rural Cemetery. Marcia Lucretia Ames (Mrs. William James) died, March 2, 1886,[45] and was buried nearby in the James family plot.[46] She was an aunt by marriage of William James, the philosopher, and Henry James, the novelist.[47]

Julius is remembered as an artist; Angelo, as a philanthropist. It is as a philanthropist that Angelo is mentioned in the editorial entitled "Death of Angelo Ames" in the *Argus*, May 27, 1886:

> Angelo Ames, one of the oldest and best known residents of Albany, died yesterday of old age. He was eighty-four years old and was born in this city being the son of Ezra Ames the famous artist. At his father's death he inherited a very large fortune in real estate. The deceased was an uncle of Mrs. Isaac Edwards. He was never married. Mr. Ames was very charitable and gave large amounts to deserving institutions, well earning the title of public benefactor.

During 1857: "In taking down the building in South Pearl Street formerly occupied by Ezra Ames as a portrait gallery, a part of the wall fell, injuring several persons. . . ."[48] This demolition, in 1857, ends the history of Ezra Ames, and of the house into which he had moved during the last decade of the 18th century.

[44] [Ames, Ezra], *Catalogue Sale of Portraits*, 1842.

[45] Hastings, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, April 1924, p. 108.

[46] Gravestone.

[47] Hastings, *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, April 1924, pp. 104–114.

[48] Munsell, IX (1858): 341.

MRS. JONATHAN WALTON (d. 1843)

By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1830–35

(Photo by FARL)

Owned by Miss Helen de Lancey Watkins

CONCLUSION

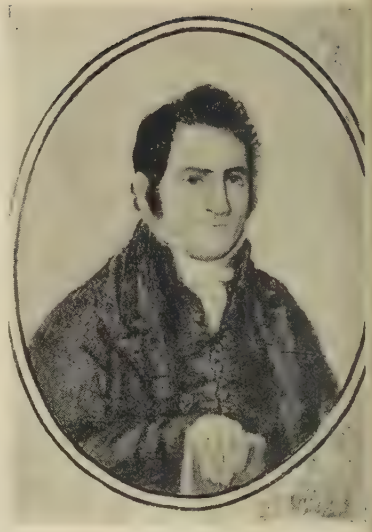
THE PORTRAITS painted by Ezra Ames constitute the most important part of his artistic activity. He painted only a few landscapes, still-life pictures of which none are located, and figure compositions. His portraits, like any portraits, may be considered as to their value as historical documents, or as to their artistic merits; and it is interesting to discuss them from both these points of view.

Living before the days when the portrait photographer became an active competitor of the portrait painter, Ezra Ames produced a larger number of portraits of people in Albany and the surrounding district than any other painter of his day. Speaking of the historical importance of these pictorial records, the late William Sawitzky wrote: "during the first three decades of the last century he [Ames] recorded the physiognomies of so many prominent and more or less interesting people, that his work deserves to be better known than it actually is."

Historically considered, his portraits have the merits of accurate likenesses painted from life. Concerning the merits of life portraits as historical documents, Thomas Carlyle wrote, to his friend David Laing, his thoughts at the time of a projected exhibition of Scottish portraits:

> . . . I have to tell you, as a fact of personal experience, that in all my poor Historical investigations it has been, and always is, one of the most primary wants to procure a bodily likeness of the personage inquired after; a good *Portrait* if such exists; failing that, even an indifferent if sincere one. In short, *any* representation, made by a faithful human creature, of that Face and Figure, which *he* saw with his eyes, and which I can never see with mine, is now valuable to me, and much better than none at all. This, which is my own deep experience, I believe to be, in a deeper or less deep degree, the universal one; and that every student and reader of History, who strives earnestly to conceive for himself what manner of Fact and *Man* this or the other vague Historical *Name* can have been, will, as the first and directest indication of all, search eagerly for a Portrait, for all the reasonable Portraits there are; and never rest till he have made out, if possible, what the man's natural face was like.

MRS. JOHN HILLS (1806–1878)
(Ames's niece, Hulda Mulford)
Miniature on paper, *c.* 1831
Owned by Miss Gladys Ladu



DR. JAMES WADE (1789–1868)
(m. Ames's niece, Sally Mulford)
Miniature on paper, *c.* 1822
Owned by Miss Edith S. Wade

Often I have found a Portrait superior in real instruction to half-a-dozen written "Biographies," as Biographies are written. . . .

The fidelity of Ames's portraits are vouched for by contemporary statements. Recording so many of the men who were prominent in shaping the events of their time and place, Ames's portraits are therefore historical documents of prime importance.

Turning from the historical to the artistic aspects of the portraiture of Ezra Ames: for convenience his portraits in miniature and those in oil may be separately discussed because two media are involved. His miniatures, in turn, may also be considered under two heads: those painted in watercolor on paper, and those painted on ivory.

A number of family miniatures are painted in watercolor on paper. Two of them, portraits of Dr. Wade and his small son Ezekiel, are painted in monotone with considerable dash, and

MRS. EZRA AMES (1775–1836)
(Zipporah Wood)
Miniature on ivory, *c.* 1815
Owned by Miss Elizabeth S. Edwards

MARCIA L. AMES (1797/8–1886)
(Artist's daughter, m. William James)
Miniature on ivory, *c.* 1818
Owned by Miss Gladys Ladu

without backgrounds. Another, of Mrs. John Hills wearing a cap, is carefully painted, and except for some slight shading around the head and shoulders, the background is untouched. There are also a number of family miniatures painted on ivory. They are all carefully painted. Among them are three self-portraits: one an oval, painted about 1790; another oval painted about 1800; and the third, a rectangle painted about 1810. A miniature of the artist's wife is painted on an oval ivory. Miniatures of the artist's daughter Marcia, and of the artist's half-brother Henry, are painted on rectangular pieces of ivory.

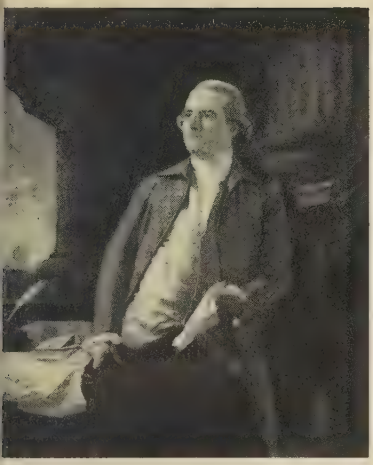
Very few professional miniatures by Ames have been located. One is a miniature painted on an oval ivory of John Fondey, Jr. Another is of Jesse Hawley which is painted on a somewhat larger piece of ivory, and is rectangular in shape. In all, not many miniatures by Ames have been located, and for the purposes of

this survey the ones mentioned are sufficient to show that they vary greatly in size, shape, and technique. They are above the work of the average miniature painter of that day; but clearly the artist was more interested in the, for him, more congenial, and certainly more remunerative, work of portrait painting in oil.

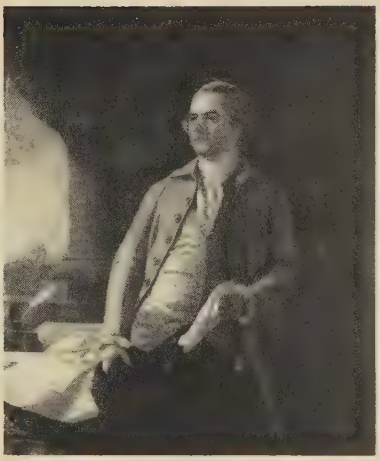
Surveying his portraits in oil in the order of their production, and tracing his development chartwise, it will be found that the artist's development was very gradual. Indeed, judging from photographs of his portrait of his father, painted about 1790, and of Elihu Phinney, 1799, the artist made no appreciable artistic progress during the first decade of his career. If one then glances at photographs of his portrait of John Kane, *c.* 1804, of George Provost, 1805, and of Joseph Brant, 1806, one sees a slight advance in the artist's ability at characterization. In the same respect, however, there is little difference between the Fondey family group, 1803, and the Tompkins family group, 1809. They are primitive paintings.

However, before he painted the Tompkins family group, Ames had already painted two portraits which foreshadowed his mature style, those of Spencer Stafford and his wife, 1807. In them, the spandrels—that is to say the corners of the canvas which have been brushed in to form an imperfect oval—are more pronounced than the faint indications of these decorative elements in the likenesses of himself about 1800, and of Elihu Phinney, 1799. In the portrait of Spencer Stafford, too, the artist has introduced a sky background for probably the first time. Finally, there is more expression in these than one finds in the earlier portraits. His portraits of Ezekiel Mulford, of Citizen Genet, and of Philip Van Cortlandt, painted during 1809–1810, show still further advance in technique and characterization.

This improvement has been accounted for elsewhere by the fact that Ames trained himself by making copies after the portraits of Copley and Stuart: one after Copley and a number after Stuart. These, as well as an original portrait by Stuart and another by John Wesley Jarvis, Ames kept in his gallery, probably as



ELKANAH WATSON (1758–1842)
By John Singleton Copley, 1782
Photo: Metropolitan Museum
Owned by Trustees, Thomson Hall Princeton, N. J.



COPY AFTER COPLEY (AT LEFT)
By Ezra Ames, *c.* 1809–10
Photo: Albany Institute
Owned by Albany Institute of History and Art

guides for his own procedure. Certainly the influences of these artists are apparent in Ames's portraits.

Despite these influences, Ames gradually evolved his own style, which after 1810 is usually so personal that his work, when a sufficient amount of it has been studied, is fairly easy to distinguish. Throughout his career he retained some very definite mannerisms. One, easily recognizable, and first noticed by Mr. Charles E. Baker, is the placing of the high lights in the eyes of the sitters. They are dot-like high lights, and are placed not on the same sides of both eyes, as they would be if the artist regarded the source of light on the sitter, but at the upper and inner edges of the pupils.

Another distinct mannerism found in some portraits, as for example that of Absalom Townsend, and one of the two portraits of Mrs. Jacob Jennings Brown, is a dark diagonal area brushed in at the upper right of the canvas. It is as if the artist, tired of painting the drapery in detail, had painted it abstractly,

in order to focus the attention on the heads alone. On the other hand, the costumes in the portraits by Ames are carefully painted, and in the case of stocks and laces great attention is given to detail. In contrast: Ames was careless about the painting of hands, and showed as little of them as possible.

He never overcame his primitive manner in the painting of children, invariably giving them a look of maturity far beyond their years. His few landscapes are also primitively executed.

For those who wish a convenient chronological list of some of the artist's representative portraits from 1810 to 1835, in order to study his technical development over those years, Ames painted portraits of: Henry Jones, 1810; Henry Newman, 1810; two self-portraits, *c.* 1810; Francis Bloodgood, *c.* 1810; Mrs. Francis Bloodgood, *c.* 1810; John Scoville, *c.* 1810; Ambrose Spencer, 1811; James Kent, two portraits, *c.* 1812; George Washington Clinton, *c.* 1813; George Clinton, half-length standing (The New-York Historical Society), 1814; Solomon Allen, 1814; Philo Ruggles, *c.* 1815; Mrs. Philo Ruggles, *c.* 1815; Matthias B. Tallmadge, *c.* 1815; Mrs. Matthias B. Tallmadge, *c.* 1815; Thomas Humphrey Cushing, *c.* 1815; Mrs. Thomas Humphrey Cushing, *c.* 1815; John Hankinson, *c.* 1815; Mrs. John Hankinson, *c.* 1815; John Tayler, 1816; Absalom Townsend, 1816; John Meads, 1816; Mrs. John Meads, 1816; Gouverneur Morris (Columbia University), 1817; DeWitt Clinton, half-length standing, 1818; Jacob Jennings Brown, two identical portraits, *c.* 1818; Mrs. Jacob Jennings Brown, two versions, one *c.* 1818, and one 1818; Mrs. Elisha Crane, 1818; Harmanus Bleecker (Harmanus Bleecker Library), 1819; Solomon Van Rensselaer, 1819; Jesse Emes, 1819; Mrs. Jesse Emes, 1819; Benjamin Tallmadge, *c.* 1820; Ambrose L. Jordan, *c.* 1820–1825; Theodore Strong, *c.* 1820; Marcus T. Reynolds, *c.* 1821; Peter Gansevoort, after Stuart, 1821; Stephen Van Rensselaer, 1818–1825; Mrs. James King, 1822; Andrew Yates, *c.* 1823; Stephen Reynolds, and Mrs. Stephen Reynolds, *c.* 1824; Clarkson Crolius, 1825; Julius R. Ames, *c.* 1826; John Keyes Paige, 1826; Mrs.

John Keyes Paige, 1826; Benjamin Tallmadge, 1826, probably a replica of the one painted *c.* 1820; Aaron Thorp, 1826; Mrs. Aaron Thorp, 1826; Frances Mary Thorp, 1826; William Tully, Jr., 1826; Samuel Stevenson Fowler, *c.* 1827; Eliphalet Nott, 1828; Myron Holley, *c.* 1829; Gerrit Yates Lansing, 1830; George Tibbits, *c.* 1833; Mrs. George Tibbits, *c.* 1833; Jonathan Walton, *c.* 1830–1835; and Mrs. Jonathan Walton, *c.* 1830–1835.

There is a group of portraits by Ames which may be discussed without regard to the order of their painting, not only because it would be difficult to establish all of their dates, but also, because they are well known as the "Portraits of Seven Governors of New York," and it is thus convenient to think of them as a series. They are the property of the City of Albany and had been in storage for some time when they were loaned to the New York State Historical Association Museum, Ticonderoga, N. Y. There they remained until 1946, when they were placed on permanent loan at the Albany Institute of History and Art. They are all large-sized canvases and make a handsome showing as a group in one wing of the building.

The portrait of George Clinton, similar to the portrait at The New-York Historical Society, and that of John Jay, which is a copy of a portrait by Gilbert Stuart, cannot be dated. However, the remaining portraits were presumably painted during or after the terms of office of the various Governors represented. Indeed, the one of DeWitt Clinton was painted in 1818 on commission from the Corporation of the City of Albany, and was begun shortly after that statesman assumed his duties as Governor in Albany. The other four portraits are of Daniel D. Tompkins, whose term of office extended from 1807–1817; of Joseph C. Yates, whose term extended from 1822–1824; of Martin Van Buren, who became Governor at the end of 1828, and resigned in March 1829, to become Secretary of State of the United States; and of Enos T. Throop, who succeeded Van Buren and was Governor of the State from 1829–1832.

In conclusion, a few of the many portraits by Ames once at-

tributed to better-known artists, but quite typical of his other work, should be mentioned again because their misattributions show the relative merit of Ames's work. Among these portraits are likenesses of: William James, formerly attributed to Gilbert Stuart and, more recently, to Waldo and Jewett; George Washington Clinton, formerly attributed to Vanderlyn; Reverend Hooper Cumming, also at one time attributed to Vanderlyn; Mrs. Hooper Cumming, once attributed to Rembrandt Peale; Gouverneur Morris (at Columbia University), attributed in several publications to Thomas Sully, and elsewhere to Charles Willson Peale as copied from Ezra Ames; Ambrose Latting Jordan, formerly attributed to Morse and, later, tentatively to Jarvis; Mrs. Jacob Jennings Brown (privately owned), once attributed to Jarvis; Francis Bloodgood, once attributed to Inman; and John Keyes Paige, formerly attributed to Francis Alexander.

It is important, in estimating Ames's position as an artist, also to recall the several portraits heretofore unattributed to any artist but now attributed by the writers to Ames. Among the best of these are the well-painted and convincing likenesses of Samuel Stevenson Fowler, Mrs. John Meads, and Mrs. Jonathan Walton.

Artistically speaking: the portraits of Fowler and Jordan, both characteristic works by Ames, are as fine as any of the men's portraits painted by Jarvis and Inman; and the portrait of Mrs. John Meads is a noteworthy performance recalling the women's portraits by Gilbert Stuart, though entirely typical of the work of Ames.

As a result of the foregoing survey, it may be said that Ames, painting in the general style of Stuart, Jarvis, Vanderlyn, Inman, and Waldo, produced a number of portraits which have the excellent artistic qualities found in the work of these men. His portraits, then, are important not only as pictorial records of men and women in New York State during the early decades of the 19th century, but also as works of art many of which rank with those of the first painters of his time.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

American Painting: History and Interpretation. By Virgil Barker. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950. xxvii + 717 pages, 100 plates, notes, index. $12.50.)

When in 1937 this reviewer began his own study of American art, Virgil Barker was already a name to conjure with. Six years before, the Whitney Museum had published his *Critical Introduction to American Painting* which, although only fifty-two pages long, was the most important general statement which had appeared since Samuel Isham's *A History of American Painting*, published in 1905. By 1937, Mr. Barker had already left New York for what seemed to us in the bustling centers of scholarship the semi-retirement of Florida.

All this time, it was rumored that Mr. Barker was preparing an extensive history of American painting. His colleagues wondered sometimes how he worked so far from the Frick Art Reference Library, where they met each other constantly, and from the rich collections of the Northeast. Now that his long-awaited volume has appeared, it has become clear what he was doing. He was engaged in deep thought.

American Painting: History and Interpretation is made up of the meditations of an able and well-informed man. Questions of attribution and sore points of controversy between impassioned scholars are rarely discussed in his pages. It could be argued that sometimes he does not adequately state the data on which his theories are grounded, yet this would be an unperceptive criticism since, in effect, it would call for a different kind of book. The multitudinous facts which must be the basis of all useful generalizations are to be found in other publications; that Mr. Barker has himself mastered them, any informed reader of his chapters will realize. However, he has chosen to present only those details which serve most effectively as springboards or milestones for his meditations. The result is less a history in the conventional sense than a long and fascinating critical essay.

Like all good essays, *American Painting* is personal, reflecting the likes and dislikes of the author, his prejudices and his personality. He does not try to imitate scientific techniques and pretend that he is writing dispassionately, as is done by some scholars who forget that art is an emotional expression that speaks to the emotions, and becomes pointless when the love or hate or perplexity of the viewer are considered irrelevant. On the contrary, Mr. Barker is frankly our guide to the pictures he presents, telling us his reactions, interestingly if sometimes with the verboseness that comes naturally to enthusiasts.

Although the reader may not always agree, he will find Mr. Barker's ideas stimulating, and even as he argues back, his understanding will be

enhanced. A painter-like suavity appeals most strongly to the author's variety of what Copley called "the lust of the eyes"; his great love is for smooth and accomplished effects. Content is to him always a secondary consideration. It follows that he is sceptical concerning the virtues of the so-called "American primitives." While agreeing that a ridiculous cult has grown up for the crabbed, the quaint, and the downright incompetent, this reviewer feels that Mr. Barker underestimates the powerful originality which sometimes characterizes crude and homespun work. Yet the author presents with insight and eloquence a consistent point of view.

Mr. Barker begins his volume with the earliest known paintings created in British America, and carries the story to what he considers the most fruitful period of American art, the late 19th century. To accompany him on this journey is an experience which no one seriously interested in American painting should miss.

New York City JAMES THOMAS FLEXNER

Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial Connecticut. By ANTHONY N. B. GARVAN. (New Haven: The Yale University Press, 1951. xiv + 166 pages, illus., index. $7.50.)

William Strickland: Architect and Engineer, 1788–1854. By AGNES ADDISON GILCHRIST. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950. xvii + 145 pages, appendices, 50 illus., index. $10.00.)

Architecture of the Old Northwest Territory: A Study of Early Architecture in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, & Part of Minnesota. By REXFORD NEWCOMB. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950. xvii + 176 pages, illus., biblio., index. $20.00.)

Over half a century has gone by since Frederick Jackson Turner horrified the conservatives and delighted the liberals in our history departments by preaching his sermon on the frontier at the World's Fair meeting of the American Historical Association, time enough for the fundamental truth in his remarks to be evident, time enough for doubts to arise concerning too generous an interpretation of his thesis. Turner, you may remember, declared that "the wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe." Which is all very picturesque, but which doesn't begin to offer an explanation of the direction in which American architecture has travelled—at least if three new monographs be given their due.

According to Anthony Garvan, the author of *Architecture and Town Planning in Colonial Connecticut*, the 17th-century settlers of the colony were far from inspired by the wilderness around them. Challenging the theory that the colonists kept changing their houses by adding on

rooms and lean-tos around the chimney, Garvan would have us believe that the size and plan were generally determined by the first owner. "One must," he says, "abandon the assumption that all types of colonial dwellings developed from a single model and substitute in its place the notion that the English colonists were familiar with many house types and each settler chose that which suited his particular class and station in life." This, of course, is another way of saying that 17th-century Connecticut architecture, for all its charms, was a static phenomenon.

Garvan goes on to prove that the town planners of Connecticut were no more adventurous than the housewrights; most of the towns were laid out according to the specifications of British strongholds in Ulster. As for the early meetinghouses, Garvan shows, in what may be considered the most brilliant chapter of his provocative monograph, that their designers were at best cautious followers of the leaders who had evolved the Protestant Plain Style abroad. Not that the author is anxious to debunk colonial architecture; no scoffer, but an unusually inquisitive scholar, he has written the most notable contribution to our understanding of the subject since Fiske Kimball's monumental study.

Like Anthony Garvan, Agnes Addison Gilchrist arrives at conclusions which are likely to disappoint those who believe that Turner found the answer to the problems of cultural as well as political history. For William Strickland, who moved from the eastern seaboard to Nashville in 1845 to supervise one of his major achievements, the capitol of Tennessee, did not find it necessary to alter the approach which he had made his own in the early years of his career in Philadelphia. A devout Grecian who was never comfortable designing in the Gothic style, he cherished his Athenian longings to the end, all the while wondering if it might be possible to reconcile "form" with the function demanded by 19th-century America.

The only sad thing about Mrs. Gilchrist's monograph, which must be accounted the definitive work on Strickland, is that we have to wait until ninety-six years after the architect's death for a conscientious study of his career. One of the many designers at the dawn of the century who doubled as engineers, Strickland was responsible not only for the final appearance of the tower of Independence Hall, but for many if not most of the important monuments of the Philadelphia of a hundred years ago. The Philadelphia Exchange was his, so was the U. S. Naval Home, and so, too, was the Second Bank of the United States—a building which Fenimore Cooper pronounced the most beautiful in America.

If Turner can't solve the riddles presented by the 17th-century architecture of Connecticut or the career of William Strickland, he can explain, to a certain extent, the richness of the pageant uncovered by Rexford Newcomb in his *Architecture of the Old Northwest Territory*. For it is undeniable that the wilderness did master the French colonists who settled in the Mississippi Valley. Out of their faint recollections of

France and their eagerness to conquer their environment, they fashioned the cottages that line the streets of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri.

Whether the Connecticut men who settled in Ohio started life anew in the wilds of the Northwest Territory is another matter. The famous Congregational Church at Tallmadge looks so native to Connecticut that many a tourist must have asked whether it was hauled all the way from Litchfield.

But to talk too much of the validity of Turner's theories is to miss the genuine importance of Rexford Newcomb's magnificently illustrated volume. It is all very well to insist that the Northwest Territory did not reach its architectural maturity until Chicago created the skyscraper, but such a simplification would be a shame if it robbed us of the enjoyment of glancing at the wonderful variety of the Midwest before the Civil War. We may be thankful that Dean Newcomb's graceful scholarship has reminded us of the strange dwelling-houses of the utopias, the dozens of Grecian and Gothic cottages, and all the other architectural delights of the Old Northwest in the days when Louis Sullivan was but a boy in Boston.

The New-York Historical Society WAYNE ANDREWS

Yale University Portrait Index 1701–1951. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951. 185 pages, illus., index of artists. $5.00.)

This is another welcome volume for those students interested in American portraiture from the early 18th century to the present time. Because the book is planned as an *Index* much information that would be expected in a catalogue of portraits is lacking. This is too bad and the reviewer can only protest this decision. The book consists of 185 pages on coated octavo paper, perfectly indexed and fully cross-referenced. Each entry, however disparate, is fitted into a neat little formula: name of subject, in rather a large type face, with a brief, but proper identification; artist when known (but the artist's dates are, alas, never given); medium and size. The date of the work is mentioned only when the artist appended it to his signature; never are dates provided which derive from external documentary evidence. Documentation of all sorts is curiously lacking in this publication. Admittedly, the exact date of acquisition for the portraits received in the early years may not have been well recorded, but surely the gifts and purchases of recent years are known and could have been noted even in a work such as this.

The one hundred and fifty reproductions appear in the double columned text with no particular plan, except that they are usually placed close to the text entry, but the halftone cuts vary considerably in size. For example on facing pages (28–29), a small oval portrait of Eleanor Parke Custis by De Brehan is placed at the top of one column while two larger cuts of unequal size occupy the top of the opposite page. The latter are both copies of earlier portraits of Yale alumni. Would not

original portraits of Yale worthies have made more suitable illustrations? And when copies after the work of known artists exist in the Yale collection why is no mention made of the present locations of the originals? All the Yale portraits could hardly have been illustrated, but the citation of previously published reproductions of the nonillustrated portraits would have been extremely useful to students.

The history of the growth of the collection of Yale portraits is outlined by John Marshall Phillips in the Preface. Generous collectors such as John Hill Morgan and Francis P. Garvan have given groups of early American portraits, and an endless number of other donors have presented individual portraits. The bulk of the collection is American in origin and consists largely of portraits of Yale alumni. However, there are four special collections of unrelated groups of portraits which swell the total holdings at Yale. These are the Trumbull historical compositions relating to the Revolutionary War (Trumbull was the founder of the present Gallery); the Gertrude Stein Collection (of which only the portraits are included here); the Schwab Collection, a group of silhouettes of a single family; and finally the Coronation portraits in the Abbey Collection. This last group should perhaps have been dealt with quite separately, for the various subjects have little if anything to do with Yale. The only reason for their inclusion is that the artist, Edwin Austin Abbey, was the recipient of an honorary M.A., in 1897, and that the artist's widow, at a date not given in this *Index*, eventually presented the portrait studies to Yale. Most readers would be interested either to see reproductions of some of these individual portraits or perhaps to see a large reproduction of the finished picture of the *Coronation* (of Edward VII) with a notation as to its present location.

This *Index* will obviously have two completely different sets of users. On the one hand, the book will be consulted by those who are primarily interested merely in locating portraits of Yale alumni. They should be well satisfied with the general arrangement and contents of the book. On the other hand, general and special students of the history of American art in turning to this book will probably be disappointed. Should they be interested for example in checking the Yale Collections for the work of such specific artists as S. F. B. Morse or Henry Inman, the index of artists can be consulted which unfortunately does not signal reproductions of the artist's work. Each entry will therefore have to be checked to determine how many works of a particular artist are here illustrated. Since Morse was a Yale alumnus, one would have expected to find a slightly more detailed biography in the subject entry. If the biographical note had been a bit longer, moreover, the student might learn the date that Morse became a professor at New York University. And this information would establish the fact that the inscriptions on the Breese portraits quoted in the *Index* are long after the fact and therefore of little historical value. Thus, for the historical student more often than not the work of checking facts can begin only where the *Index* leaves off.

More data of the sort suggested above would certainly have produced a much more useful volume, but considerations of time and perhaps also of cost have led to the publication of what is, after all, presented not as a catalogue but an "Index." We must be grateful for what is included, since the Yale holdings in portraiture are extremely important even beyond the narrow field of the history of American art.

Smith College Museum of Art MARY BARTLETT COWDREY

The Essential New Yorker, Gulian Crommelin Verplanck. By ROBERT W. JULY. (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1951. xvii + 313 pages, biblio., index, illus. $5.00.)

To the present-day admirers of the past, the 19th century is of great interest. While it has not the glamour nor the art of the 18th, it is within the memory of many of us and therefore seems more real. In the first fifty years of this era New York City and State made wonderful strides in their development on all fronts, as did the entire nation. One of the outstanding personalities and recognized leaders of the City at this time was Gulian Crommelin Verplanck. This "Essential New Yorker" was undoubtedly one of the most prominent figures in politics, culture and literature.

Robert W. July has written a most comprehensive biography of this interesting and attractive man. The story is as complete as it seems possible to make it, with a very adequate section of notes, bibliography and index. The quotations and excerpts from contemporary pamphlets are numerous and pertinent. The index is especially to be commended. It is a digest of the entire book and if you are in a hurry to see what it is all about—there is the story.

Gulian's life is thoroughly covered from his early years with his Grandmother Verplanck until his death. He seems to have been a most precocious child, entering Columbia at eleven and graduating in 1801 at the age of fourteen—the youngest graduate to this day. He had the great advantage of being the grandson of William Samuel Johnson, first President of Columbia College, and so received sound advice and instruction during his adolescent years. In 1817 he was admitted to the bar by Chief Justice, afterwards Chancellor, Kent, but only once did he practice, then to defend himself on the charge of riot—in church! This famous disturbance took place at a Columbia Commencement in Trinity Church when a student was refused his degree because he delivered his oration as he wrote it rather than as it had been approved by the faculty.

In this case Gulian came into opposition for the first time with DeWitt Clinton, then Mayor of New York. Their antagonism lasted for years although Verplanck did back Clinton strongly on the Erie Canal project. These battles with the Mayor, and later Governor, produced many satirical pamphlets and verses considered of great wit at that time.

The chapter on the Bucktail Bards, though no doubt necessary as history of the times, seems rather dull now, and its "happy flight of wit and satire" hardly amusing to 20th-century readers. But Chief Justice Daly wrote that "the political satire upon Clinton was of great merit not only in epigrammatic point of verse, but in the wit and learning displayed in the notes with which it was profusely garnished"!

On October 2, 1811, Gulian married Eliza Fenno of Philadelphia. They had two sons, William Samuel and Gulian. For the few years of their married life they were a most devoted and happy couple. Sadly enough Eliza Fenno's health began to fail after the birth of their second boy and they were advised to seek a climate warmer than that of New York. The two children were left at Fishkill with Gulian's half sister, Mary Anna, who brought them up. Their mother died in Paris on April 29, 1817. She is buried in Pere LaChaise Cemetery. After her death Gulian travelled on the Continent and in England for about two years, spending some time with Washington Irving. He never remarried.

Upon his return to New York he was soon in the thick of the political battles of the day. He had begun his career as a Federalist but later became a low-tariff, anti-slavery Democrat, a Sachem of Tammany Hall, later to oppose it as Whig, and a strong states' rights man. He was elected to the Assembly at Albany for three terms and a few years later to Congress for four terms. There he became chairman of the powerful Committee of Ways and Means and also chairman of the Committee on Public Buildings. Of the bills formulated by him, his extension of the copyright law from fourteen to twenty-eight years, with a renewal right of fourteen additional years, is considered one of his most notable achievements. Some political experts say his greatest victory—vindication—was in defeat, for his Verplanck Bill, a low-tariff measure of sound constitutionality, was amended to death and replaced by an inferior one of Henry Clay's. Gulian strongly advocated the continuation of the charter of the second Bank of the United States and fought for it to the bitter end. He believed in a low tariff and a strong bank. The New York Branch of the Bank was on the site of Gulian's old home, then No. 3 Wall Street.

After eight years in Washington Verplanck retired in 1833 from national politics, but was not allowed to remain idle. He was persuaded to run for mayor on the Whig ticket in 1834. In this most riotous election of the century, Cornelius Lawrence defeated him by 180 votes! Upon this defeat, by so small a margin that there should have been a recount, Gulian devoted himself more to his literary and social interests. However, in 1837 he was elected by the Whigs of the New York district to the State Senate where he served four years. He supported Governor Seward in his public works program and served on several important committees —a very active legislator. As State Senator he became a member of the Court of Errors. Here he shone through his whole term, admired for his distinguished judicial decisions, especially by Chief Justice Daly and Chancellor Kent.

The author writes of Gulian being "indolent" and "essentially lazy." From the context of this biography I cannot agree with that charge. Throughout Gulian's life his great activity in many spheres of interest repudiates it. If ever a man was fully occupied he appears to be the one. He was prompt to support worthwhile causes, very prominent in literary and social circles, invariably occupied with politics, and always ready to help his friends and sometimes his opponents. However, he does not appear to have been ambitious for himself but worked for the principles he believed in. The statement that "as a politician he was a miserable failure" is not borne out by the record. He certainly was elected to numerous offices and could have had more. "As a statesman Gulian C. Verplanck approached greatness" seems nearer the truth.

One of Verplanck's finest accomplishments was his success as President of the Commissioners of Emigration. He served for twenty-three years on this board, being an original member. He was particularly sympathetic and helpful to the Irish-famine refugees, and they appreciated it. In 1864 the huge Verplanck Emigrant Hospital was opened on Ward's Island, a suitable memorial to the emigrants' best friend. Father Martin P. Harney, S.J., in his booklet *Irish Famine Refugees in New England*, issued May 29, 1947, says: "The Immigration Commissioner of New York State, Mr. Gulian Verplanck, a gentleman of Dutch ancestry, deserves the everlasting gratitude of Irish-Americans. Mr. Verplanck devoted twenty three years of unselfish endeavors for the benefit of Irish immigrants." And Mr. Daniel A. Lennon, New York, of Irish ancestry, writes: "Hoping that God will bless all of the Verplancks because of him."

In 1826 Gulian was appointed to the Board of Regents and in 1858 became Vice Chancellor of the State University. When the State Library was placed under the Regents he devoted his energies and knowledge to its renovation and development, increasing the volumes from 10,000 to over 82,000.

Verplanck was a sincere Christian and on Bishop Hobart's invitation taught four years in the General Theological Seminary, the incorporation of which had been at his insistence when he was in the legislature. He wrote his book *Evidences of Revealed Religion* during this period. The author's review of this book is not altogether favorable. While admitting that "his historical arguments were impressive and his logic irrefutable," he says that little new material is offered and he unequivocally condemns, "as vicious and bigoted outbursts," Gulian's criticism of the eastern religions. This surprising attitude of the biographer was not concurred in by Verplanck's contemporaries nor is it by this reviewer.

We come now to Gulian's greatest literary production. At the request of Harper's he undertook the editing of what today would be called a deluxe edition of Shakespeare, handsomely bound and fully illustrated by Meadows, Harvey and others. A life by Rowe and an abridgement of

Collier's life were included with preface, introductory remarks on each play, Shakespeare's will and signatures, and commendatory verses. It took Gulian three years and, in the opinion of all but the moderns, it is the most scholarly American edition ever produced.

Gulian died on March 18, 1870, at the age of 84. The funeral in Trinity Church, New York, was attended by all the prominent people of the community. The Reverend Morgan Dix made an eloquent and truthful eulogy of his exemplary character; a fitting tribute to his old friend. He is buried in the family plot, Trinity Church Yard, Fishkill, New York.

Verplanck had a sound knowledge of Shakespeare and the theater, of literature, history, law, and religious dogma, and was comprehensive and catholic in his tastes and sympathies. He was considered an outstanding judge of painting and sculpture but not of music. He had proved to be an excellent reporter, particularly in Washington, for his friend William Cullen Bryant, then editor of the *Evening Post*. Perhaps the reason he has been somewhat forgotten is that he was not an orator. To retain a place in the public memory public speaking appears to have been as necessary then as it is today.

The Essential New Yorker is an interesting and well-written biography, showing scholarly care and industry in research. While its conclusions are open to question on several points, on the whole we find it an honest appraisal of the life and character of the subject. The reader cannot help but like, respect, and admire this really great 19th-century American, Gulian Crommelin Verplanck.

The following anonymously written sonnet, signed "J. J. R., Saugerties, 8th July, 1868," was found recently by the reviewer. It seems to be rather a complete biography in itself and echoes the qualities of the man described in the book.

GULIAN CROMMELIN VERPLANCK

A Knickerbocker of the genuine stamp
And wing,—of metal pure, sound, firm, & bright,—
Both Church & State confess the valued light
Oft streaming from his well-fed, well-trimmed lamp.
Aye prompt youth's budding genius from the damp
Of groundless fear to free, & thus excite
To worthy effort; he himself a knight
Of good renown has shown in cultured Camp
Of literary Chiefs. With Irving's name
And Bryant's its due place Verplanck's shall claim
Nor this alone his memory shall enshrine.
Myriads from foreign shores,—to ours who came
A better home to seek,—might justly twine
A wreath for him, whom twenty years the emigrant's friend see shine.

Fishkill-on-the-Hudson, N. Y. BAYARD VERPLANCK

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

A CALENDAR of the events and functions of the Society from its opening after the August vacation until the end of 1951 follows:

September 17: Preview of the special exhibition, SURVIVORS OF A CENTURY, for members of the press and representatives of participating newspapers. (The exhibition opened to the public the following day, and continued through December 30th.)

October 2: Lecture illustrated with motion pictures for members and friends, "The Birth of a Navy," about the battle of Lake Champlain in 1776, by Mr. L. F. Hagglund.

October 13: High School History Program: "How Early America Lived," illustrated lecture and demonstration by Miss Pless, and film, "Drums Along the Mohawk." First in series of ten weekly free motion-picture programs, A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Conservation Road," "Power Behind the Nation," and "Productivity: Key to Plenty."

October 16: Election symposium in auditorium jointly sponsored by the New York Wellesley Club, League of Women Voters and four New York Women's College Clubs. Candidates for office of President of City Council who spoke were Michael Bartell, Clifford McAvoy, Rudolf Halley, Joseph Sharkey, Henry Clay (for Henry Latham). Special exhibit of Audubon Bat Pictures put on display in Audubon Room. (Exhibit continued through November 18th.)

October 20: School Art League Program: "Statues Can Talk," about the statuette groups of John Rogers, by Miss Pless. A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "The Cowboy," "Water For Dry Land," and "An Industrial Lake Port."

October 23: Opening of special exhibition, RECENT ACCESSIONS, acquired during the past year. (Exhibition to continue through February 10th.)

October 27: School Art League Program: "The Artist Sees New York," illustrated talk by Mr. Carlson. A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Big Harvest: The Story of Agriculture," "Farm and City," and "Here Is Tomorrow."

November 3: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Here Comes the Mail" and "Palmour Street."

November 4: Meeting of the Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences.

November 6: In connection with the newspaper exhibition, at the monthly meeting for members and friends of the Society Major General Julius Ochs Adler, General Manager of *The New York Times*, spoke on "The Newspaper After a Century of Progress," and Mr.

James Wechsler, Editor of the *New York Post*, spoke on "The Newspaper Today and Tomorrow."

November 9: Meeting of the New York Society for General Semantics.

November 10: School Art League Program: "Statues Can Talk" by Miss Pless. A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Valley Town," "Machine: Master or Slave?" and "Made in U. S. A."

November 13: Opening of a permanent exhibition, 19TH CENTURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS.

November 17: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Answer For Anne" and "A U.S. Community and its Citizens."

November 24: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Wilson Dam School" and "Assignment Tomorrow."

November 29: First of three meetings of the New York section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

December 1: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "As Our Boyhood Is," "Children's Village," and "Make Way for Youth."

December 5: Meeting of Society of American Historians.

December 6: St. Nicholas Day Program for members and friends: "Quicker Than the Eye," a program of magic by John Mulholland, followed by a collation and music in Dexter Hall, and a private showing of a permanent exhibition, EARLY AMERICAN TOYS. (The exhibition opened to the public the following day.)

December 8: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Democracy's Diary," "The Challenge," and "The Town."

December 13: Second of three meetings of the New York section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

December 15: A FILM PORTRAIT OF AMERICA TODAY, showing "Books and People: The Wealth Within," "Your National Art Gallery," and "Hymn of the Nations."

December 20: Last of three meetings of the New York section of the National Council of Jewish Women.

Miss Barck was one of the speakers at the 15th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists at Annapolis, October 15 and 16, when she spoke on "How Archival Displays Are Arranged by The New-York Historical Society." The Columbia University course, "Resources and Methods of American Historical Societies," is being given again by Mr. Vail, with the help of the department heads, and a session of the New York University course, "The Museums and the Schools," met once more at the Society on October 11th to learn about our school-museum activities. The Society was visited by the Queens College History Club and honorary history fraternity on November 10th. They were conducted on a tour of the building and Miss Barck told them about the research facilities of the library.

CHRISTMAS DINNER FOR THE MAINTENANCE STAFF

Through the generosity of Mrs. Katharine Prentis Murphy a full-course turkey dinner was enjoyed by members of the maintenance staff on December 21, 1950, and again on December 19, 1951. Above is a table of the 1950 dinner.

Mrs. Meryle Evans is making a weekly radio appearance with Mr. Lloyd Moss on WNYC, Mondays at 8:15 A.M. The program, "Around New York," tells of New York City's history and relates it to material in The New-York Historical Society. For Ben Grauer's "Seeing Is Believing" show, WNBT, 6:15 P.M., museum material pertinent to the election, the children's book exhibit, and the Lloyd Morris book: *Incredible New York*, the manuscript of which has been given to the library, has been lent for display. Miss Barck appeared on the WJZ-TV program, "Market Melodies," on November 7th with a selection of books from the children's book exhibit. The early American toy exhibition was also featured on the "Market Melodies" program on December 4th and on the "Nancy Craig" program on December 17th when Mrs. Evans and Miss Pless, respectively, appeared with a sampling of the toys.

The new time for the programs of organ music on Sunday afternoons, which began again on October 7th, is now 2:30 to 3:45 P.M.

Coming events include an exhibition of Country Houses on Manhattan Island, scheduled for opening on January 22d, a lecture by Dr. Richard McCormick, President of the New Jersey Historical Society, on January 8th, and a talk on historic Charleston by Mrs. Elizabeth O'Neill Verner on February 5th.

RECENT ACCESSIONS

OIL portrait of *James Hugh Beekman* by J. Irving, 1884. *Gift of Dr. Fenwick Beekman.*

Autograph album of signatures of President Pierce and of members of Congress, 1857, obtained by the Honorable James Bishop, donor's father, when he was a Congressman. *Gift of Mr. Louis F. Bishop.*

Eight scrapbooks of newspaper clippings of the presidential campaigns of 1932, 1936, 1940, and 1944; Worthington family Bible; *U.S. Steel News,* volumes 1 and 2. *Gift of Mr. Charles W. Bryan, Jr.*

Eighteen manuscript deeds and abstracts of titles, five pamphlets, and two broadsides, relating to land in Kings County, and property of Trinity Church. *Gift of Mr. Arthur W. Clement.*

Two hundred small photographs of New York City, principally the Greenwich Village area, taken about 1895–1915 by the donor's father, Philip Corell. *Gift of Miss Louise I. Corell.*

Oil portrait of *Frank A. Munsey,* owner of the *New York Sun,* by Howard Chandler Christy. *Gift of Mr. Thomas W. Dewart.*

Thirty-five boxes of business correspondence and records, 1800–1850, of Ogden, Day & Co., of Ogden, Ferguson & Co., and of John Ferguson, merchants of New York City. *Gift of Mr. Henry L. Ferguson and of Mr. Albert L. Ferguson.*

Collection of pins and buttons of War Relief Societies and other wartime organizations, which were sold in New York City during World War II. *Gift of Mr. Albert Gallatin.*

Volume of photographs of the exterior and interior of "Kama-Loca," residence of E. August Neresheimer, on the southeast corner of Lenox Avenue and 119th Street, about 1888–1893. *Gift of Mrs. Frederick S. Garrison.*

Oil portrait of an *Unidentified Young Lady* by Henry Inman. *Gift of Mr. Prosper Guerry.*

Fourteen hundred and fifty-five portraits of Vice Presidents, Supreme Court Justices, and Cabinet members, 1789–1913, comprising engravings, lithographs, sheet music covers and silk badges, in eleven volumes. *Gift of Henry O. Havemeyer, Esq.*

China place setting, silver spoon, napkin and name plate from the home of Henry J. Raymond, founder and editor of *The New York Times,* at 12 West 9th Street. *Gift of Mrs. S. L. Holbrook.*

Landscape with Ducks by Edward Gay, 1885. *Gift of Mr. Marshall Forbes Kiddle.*

Letters, documents, diaries, and account books, 19th century, of the Bowne, Lawrence, Mott and Townsend families of Long Island and New York City; genealogical notes of Mrs. Walter Bowne Lawrence. *Gift of Mr. Townsend Lawrence.*

Manuscript and printer's proofs of the donor's *Incredible New York,* and copies of the book. *Gift of Mr. Lloyd Morris.*

Brocaded satin wedding dress, shoes and bag, worn by Mary Lynch, at her marriage to Egbert Benjamin Egberts, August 14, 1740. *Gift of Miss Evelyn Newman.*

Silver bowl presented to donor by his associates in the New York Public Library on the occasion of his retirement, June 30, 1941; Belgian pistol and other mementoes. *Gift of Dr. Victor Hugo Paltsits.*

Three Dutch windows with coats-of-arms and dates, 1614, 1630, 1643, said to have come from a house on 8th Street, New York. *Gift of Mrs. Howard Chandler Robbins.*

Plaster bust of *John Rogers* (1866–1939), son of the sculptor and donor's brother, by John Rogers, 1871; 609 letters, 1837–1864, 570 from John Rogers, Sr. to his family, 39 from other members of his family. *Gift of Miss Katherine R. Rogers.*

Commission from Governor William L. Marcy, 1837, to John Augustus Arthur, Jr. (1820–1905), donor's maternal grandfather. *Gift of Miss Josephine Arthur Rohrer.*

Brocade cape trimmed with beads and feathers, late 19th century. *Gift of Mrs. Charles Scribner.*

Oil portrait of *Samuel T. Shaw* by Charles F. Naegele. *Gift of Mr. James E. Shaw.*

Fifty-eight proofs and prints of bookplates by Sidney W. Alabaster; 64 personal Christmas cards of engravers and artists (supplementing previous large gifts). *Gift of Mr. Oliver Clement Sheean.*

Oil portrait of *Rufus King* (1755–1827) by an unidentified artist. *Gift of Miss Emily H. Suydam.*

Eight photographs of engines built by Danforth, Cooke & Company Locomotive Works, Paterson, N. J. *Gift of Mr. William G. Van Name.*

Oil portraits of *Mr.* and *Mrs. Isaac Michael Dyckman,* and of their daughters, *Fannie Fredericka and Mary Alice Dyckman,* by Henry A. Loop; eighteen manuscript and printed maps and six auction catalogues of Dyckman property on Manhattan Island; 23 photographs of members of the Dyckman family. *Bequest of Mrs. Alexander McMillan Welch (Fannie Fredericka Dyckman).*

Papers of Horace White, donor's father, as chairman of Governor Charles Evans Hughes's Committee on Speculation in Securities and Commodities, comprising 36 letters, nine pamphlets, and 59 typewritten pages of testimony and proceedings. *Gift of Miss Amelia E. White.*

Life of Charles Lennox Wright (1852–1901), pioneer of zinc etching, written and illustrated by his son, the donor. *Gift of Mr. Charles Lennox Wright II.*

Wash drawing of the interior of an 18th-century tavern; *Osceola of Florida,* lithograph by George Catlin from his original portrait, 1838. *Gift of Mr. George A. Zabriskie.*